

John Wycliffe's Parallel Eucharistic Theology and Ecclesiology

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Table of Contents

<i>Abstract and Vita</i>	2
<i>Introduction</i>	3
<i>Chapter One: Historical Setting</i>	13
<i>Chapter Two: The Eucharist</i>	39
<i>Chapter Three: The Church</i>	54
<i>Chapter Four: Parallel Logic</i>	76
<i>Conclusion</i>	88
<i>Bibliography</i>	92

ABSTRACT

Because of the methodology of his metaphysical realism, John Wycliffe draws similar conclusions in his Eucharistic theology and in his Ecclesiology, namely (1) both the substance of the Church and the substances of the elements proceed from Grosseteste's third universal, existing collectively by means of individual instantiations. (2) Upon their mystical transformation, the quiddity of the former substance is not annihilated but is made consubstantial with the newly formed substance. Thus in the case of the Eucharist, the bread and wine exist after the words of institution, and their forms are taken up into the grandeur of the Body and Blood of Christ. In the case of the Church, the temporal Church exists as the pre-known and therefore predestined elect, independent of the pope. The pope functions as the head of the temporal Church, however he does not replace the true head of the Church who is Christ Jesus. The members of the Church exist within the body of the Church whose head is Christ and are never annihilated because of their subsistent existence thereupon. This understanding of the procession of Wycliffe's theology from his Metaphysics is unique both because no one has thought to compare these two areas of this theology, or has seen his theology as flowing so directly from Metaphysics to Theology. This argument makes Wycliffe read more coherently, as his detractors have made him out to be spurious and difficult to read.

VITA

The author of this work is Christopher William Warne. Born June 21, 1992, in Lawrence, Massachusetts, he currently lives in Kenosha Wisconsin, although he spent the majority of his life and education in northern Massachusetts. He did his undergraduate work at Gordon College in Wenham Massachusetts, where he double majored in Biblical Studies with a concentration in Biblical Languages, Global Christianity, and a minor in Classics. Upon Graduation he entered into Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary where he received his Masters of Divinity in May 2018, as well as this thesis for the Masters of Arts in Church History. He currently is pursuing a Sacred Theology Masters at Nashotah House Theological Seminary in Nashotah Wisconsin in the area of Systematic Theology. He expects to graduate from Nashotah House in the Spring of 2020.

Introduction

Nevertheless, driven from the university and abandoned by the rich and noble, Wyclif's teaching proved a lasting influence among the people in the larger story of Nonconformity.¹

Herbert Workman finishes his two volume study on John Wycliffe with these words about his lasting impact. Much can be said about the fourteenth-century theologian. He wrote extensively amassing a series of books over a mere half decade (1378-1384). He stood up to corrupt power in his day, putting his reputation on the line for what he believed to be the Truth. However, what is likely Wycliffe's greatest achievement has hitherto been passed over: a tremendously intricate system of theological realism upon which theology is played out. While studies have been done about his metaphysics, Eucharistic theology, and Ecclesiology, no one has thought to compare them. *This thesis will then be the first to compare Wycliffe's metaphysical methodology between his Eucharistic theology and Ecclesiology, with both theological subjects stemming from his metaphysical realism.* Yet, before this can be undertaken, some preliminary remarks about the study of Wycliffe must be made.

Historiography and Wycliffe

As one begins to read Wycliffe's works, he can find himself filled with a false sense of understanding towards this complicated and nuanced thinker. There is a lore that surrounds

¹ Herbert B. Workman. *John Wyclif: A Study of the English Medieval Church*. Vol. 2. Oxford, UK: Clarendon Press. 1926. 404.

Wycliffe. According to his detractors he was an arch-heretic. According to his supporters he was the morning star of the reformation.² Both of these lenses color the readers view of Wycliffe, not allowing him to speak on his own terms. Sifting through the bias of the authors who write on Wycliffe is paramount in coming to understand his theology. The question is then put forth: what did John Wycliffe actually believe? Thus some preliminary remarks about the study of John Wycliffe are in order before the purpose of this thesis can be stated.

The question of who is John Wycliffe is highly dependent on when and from where one is examining their beliefs. Are you a fifteenth-century Czech priest, or a nineteenth-century romantic biographer? Are you protestant or catholic? Or can one be beyond these lenses? A good starting point is the beginning of G. R. Evans' book *John Wyclif*.

To Wyclif we owe... our English language, our English Bible, and our reformed religion... Expand that three-fold claim a little further. It means nothing less than this: that in Wyclif we have the acknowledged father of English prose, the first translator of the whole Bible into the language of the English people, the first disseminator of that Bible amongst all classes, the foremost intellect of his times brought to bear upon the religious questions of the day, the patient and courageous writer of innumerable tracts and books, not for one, but for all different classes of society.³

Evans quotes Montagu Burrows to highlight the protestant zeal typical of nineteenth-century biographers of Wycliffe. What Evans is highlighting as she begins her own biography of Wycliffe, is how Montagu's romanticizing lens leads him to overstate Wycliffe's impact upon English life.⁴ A zeal to find an English source for the Reformation before the time of Luther

² The Morning Star of the Reformation is a reference to Revelation 2.28 "...To the one who conquers I will also give the morning star." According to St. John the divine the morning star will come in the wake of the persecution of Satan, which is meant to be the Roman Catholic Church of the sixteenth century. The term however is not original to the reformers themselves but is a romanticization of Wycliffe in the modern period.

³ Montagu Burrows. *Wyclif's place in history: Three Lectures Delivered before the University of Oxford in 1881*. London, UK: W. Isbister, 1882. 6-7 found in G. R. Evans. *John Wyclif*. Oxford, UK: Lion Hudson plc. 2005. 9.

⁴ Evans. 9-11.

brought about much of the modern work on Wycliffe's thought.⁵ However, while Montagu's intention is to trace the origins of the Reformation, this can obfuscate the work which Wycliffe is doing in his own time. The reader of Wycliffe must get past the zeal to see Wycliffe as the proto-reformer and understand him as he understood himself.

An alternative but equally improper bias is the normative stance of the pre-Vatican II Roman Catholic church, which viewed Wycliffe as an arch-heretic. This is exemplified in George Trevelyan's *England in the Age of Wycliffe*.⁶ Trevelyan highlights Wycliffe's anti-papal rhetoric, seeing him as a troubled priest endeavoring to disrupt the Church's *status quo*. While this is not untrue, it was not Wycliffe's agenda to tear down ecclesiastical walls for the sake of reformation. There is little to no evidence he was trying to begin a movement. Although the Lollards followed in his wake, they were more about academic scholarship than political upheaval of the *status quo*. It seems more likely Wycliffe believed he was theologically correct and justified for his beliefs. This led him to be frustrated with the powers that be, powers who refused to accept his metaphysical views for a variety of reasons.

The final lens is that of the academic, which believes Wycliffe to be an academic struggling for the Truth in the face of corrupt institutional power. According to this lens, Wycliffe merely had his rather small *niche* at Oxford from which he spoke his Truth. He was simply an actor in the much larger drama of history. The Jesuit L. J. Daly sums up the modern understanding of Wycliffe and his intellectual heredity in his essay in *The Political Theory of John Wyclif*. He addresses the ever concentrically tightening view of Wycliffe's opinions.

⁵ If one follows the logic used by the turn of the nineteenth century Wycliffe scholars, Wycliffe influenced Jan Huss who in turn affected Martin Luther. Thus many of the ideas that would become prevalent during the reformation could be linked to the fourteenth century English academic.

⁶ George Macaulay Trevelyan O.M. *England in the Age of Wycliffe*. New York, NY: Longmans, Green and Co. 1899.

...the progress of modern research has tended more and more to narrow the compass of Wyclif's political influence and to point out that his originality is more limited than hitherto realized by many of his biographers. This is actually saying nothing more than that Wyclif, to a large extent, was a man of his own times.⁷

Wycliffe wrote and debated within his time. To expect him to do otherwise is to expect him to not be human. It seems only logical to expect him to be understood in the intellectual milieu of the late fourteenth-century Oxford.

However, a skeptical mind may look at this lens and question how anyone could believe that they truly could read Wycliffe in his own time. Is this not simply the replacement of either protestant romanticizing tendencies or Roman catholic condemnation with that of the academy sympathies: attempting to read Wycliffe as an academic? Here the issue of reading Wycliffe is laid bare. One can attempt to read Wycliffe in his historical context as is currently understood, however, one must bear in mind that while presently, value is placed on reading an author 'within his own time', this may not be the view forever. While this thesis will adhere to this reading of Wycliffe, it must be admitted, for the sake of honesty, that the present author is only affirming his own values and therefore claims no 'better' reading of Wycliffe than the other two previously highlighted: Wycliffe's detractors and supporters. The advantage is that there is honesty in the approach. Clarity at this point is a must, because the entire thesis is based on this hermeneutic of reading: from constructed history to theology firmly placing Wycliffe as a man both affecting his time as well as effected by his time.

⁷ L. J. Daly. *The Political Theory of John Wyclif*. Chicago, IL: Loyola University Press. 1962. 1.

Disciplinary Misunderstandings between Theology and Philosophy

One of the major issues that arises in the study of Wycliffe is the zeal to read backwards from his theology to his metaphysics.⁸ For Wycliffe, this is wholly backward. He understood theology to be a result of metaphysics. God's revealed Truth in the Bible was treated as primary and was the standard of Truth. However, it required a system by which to interpret it.⁹ His philosophical system leads to his theology, and not vice-versa. This is not to say theology was below philosophy for Wycliffe. On the contrary, philosophy was the handmaid of theology. However, theology was always understood by means of metaphysics. Thus the question is raised: where does Wycliffe begin his metaphysical system?

Philosophical Realism

Realism was the position of the day in the late fourteenth century Oxford, reacting to the nominalism normalized decades before. Each academic had his own understanding of realism. However, they all ran together in sharing the idea that metaphysical quiddity is a Real quiddity. Quiddity is a term used in the examination of ontology. Quiddity, or 'what-ness', is the measure of a thing's (*rei*) existence insofar as it exists in itself. Realism stands opposed to nominalism, which was made popular by William of Ockham. Nominalism expressly rejects this proposition,

⁸ Evans. 219. Being himself a prodigious scholar of Wycliffe, Trevelyan notes here his need to revisit his thoughts on the Evangelical Doctor in light of new manuscript being published in the 1980s. See Trevelyan for a pre-Vatican II view of Wycliffe. Trevelyan, *Wyclif*.

⁹ Scholastic Hermeneutics are difficult to pin down. One reason for this, is that many authors, much as is true in modern times, had differing opinions on how to go about reading the Bible. For Wycliffe, the Bible represented historical truth (*Historie*), similar to the fundamentalist understanding today. However, the defense of this reading was completely a non-issue for Wycliffe, as scientific discovery was in theology and philosophy during his life. Rather his use of Scripture was to be woven in with his philosophy. A good example of this is his using Galatians 2 to justify his understanding of predication at the beginning of *De Universalibus*. From St. Paul's 'The faith of Christ is preached among the Gentiles,' he understands preaching to be the first mode of predication (the typical translation of *predicare*). It is this witness to revelation that will be Wycliffe's Hermeneutic. John Wycliffe. *De Universalibus*. Trans. Anthony Kenny. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press. 1985. (1) I.28-36.

favoring the idea that Metaphysics is the discussion of signs without quiddity. These signs refer solely to those *rei* that are experientially tangible. *Realism is the philosophical system that believes what is experienced is Real, expressly that those things that are metaphysical can be experienced and thus are quidditatively Real.*

A good example of this question and one that is apropos for Wycliffe's time is 'What is a nation?' According to the realists, a nation is a *res* that has metaphysical quiddity outside of the collective individuals that instantiate it. So there is more to the nation of England than simply the people who live within its borders and call themselves English. The nominalists believed differently, finding the nation of England to be a sign which people living within the borders of the island nation agreed upon as a common term. For a nominalist, there is nothing beyond the people aforementioned which exists with any sort of quiddity.

However, a caveat must be made in this explanation. It would be easy for a modern reader to look at Wycliffe's position of realism as being highly pedantic and unrepresentative of what should be seen as an obvious reality. Thoughts are not tangible and therefore do not have quiddity.¹⁰ However, this is not what Wycliffe means by quiddity. Quiddity is not a measure of physicality, but is more broadly a measure of something's 'what-ness'. Wycliffe does not believe metaphysical *rei* to be of a physical nature, but of their own unique and quidditative metaphysical nature.

Returning then to the original example: the quiddity of a 'nation' as being distinct from those individuals who comprise it is the power the *res* exercises upon a subject. *Quiddity as a*

¹⁰ In a post-Wittgensteinian world - although there is an argument to be made that Wittgenstein does not actually believe this point given his work with colors - that signs are things that refer to other signs creating language games. This therefore creates a disconnect between reality and what is spoken about it, making signs non-physical. Thus this view tends towards Ockham's opinion from the start, naturally as he is one of the forefathers of modern logic.

term for Wycliffe is defined as the extent that something exists, whether it be physical or metaphysical. So the concept that the English have a ‘stiff upper lip’ when it comes to controversy affects how they act in the face of said conflict. The concept of a national identity, which is part of a nation, can be seen to be accidentally related to its formal and quidditative existence as a metaphysical *rei*. Thus, non-physical *rei* have their own quiddity, which is no less Real than that of physical quiddity.

The Purpose of this Thesis

After this grounding in philosophical realism, it is possible to explain the purpose of this thesis. John Wycliffe was a profound thinker who experienced a great deal of persecution for his system of theology. Oftentimes, he is viewed as disparate, treating individual issues in an *ad hoc* manner, with little connection to other issues. This could not be further from the truth. Wycliffe in fact had an overarching metaphysics which in the specific case of the Eucharist and Ecclesiology led him to affirm a real metaphysical presence of the pretransformed, in both the substance of the bread and wine as well as the Church *after their metaphysical transformations*. While his summa, along with most of his other works, present a man bitterly wrapped up in his anti-papal views, this stems from his metaphysical beliefs and not the opposite. Wycliffe’s theology has a sound and logical methodology that it would seem to have hitherto been left unexplored.

The Contribution of this Thesis

Tracing the similarities between Wycliffe's Eucharistic Theology and his Ecclesiology is important in understanding his thinking. While researching this thesis, it became apparent many Wycliffe scholars believed him to be rather *ad hoc* with his theological inquiry. Little to no connection between subjects such as Eucharistic Theology and Ecclesiology were noted. Herbert Workman mentions a connection between Wycliffe's concept of the Church and State with the Eucharist; however, he leaves it as a successive temporal relationship and not a metaphysical one.¹¹

If indeed the unified metaphysical schema was intended on Wycliffe's part, his thoughts will appear less disorganized and his *summa* prove more coherent. Although he was a disgruntled academic—as will be shown in chapter one—this is not what fueled his divergent theology. On the contrary, his divergent theology caused him to be a disgruntled academic, as his underlying metaphysical process pervades minimally the two major areas in question. What this thesis seeks to contribute to the wider literature on Wycliffe is an attempt to trace his thinking so as to make it appear more logical, which I believe was Wycliffe's intention all along.

Outline

Chapter one will outline the historical setting of Wycliffe's life. Starting with all the reigning popes during his life, through the beginning of the Western Schism a cursory understanding of how papal authority functioned shall be established. This is important because

¹¹ Workman either sees only a connection in that Wycliffe began his study of the eucharist after he had begun work on the relationship between the Church and the State, or he is using this as a transition from his own treatment of the two subjects. Either way, the treatment of a schema that exists behind Wycliffe's thought is not addressed. Herbert Workman. *John Wyclif*. Oxford, UK: Clarendon Press. 1926. 30.

it would be the power that Wycliffe himself contends with. Next will be a discussion of two major events that would span Wycliffe's entire life: the Hundred Years War and the Black Plague. While little can be used to show how they psychologically affected him, there is little doubt that they indeed had some effect. The effect in the case of the Black Death may have been a hardening of his resolve towards Truth, whereas the Hundred Years War was a beginning point of his beliefs regarding nationalism. Finally, we'll include a short biography of Wycliffe's life at Oxford and his fall from ecclesiastical grace.

Chapter two will discuss Wycliffe's Eucharistic theology, laying half of the groundwork for proving this thesis. Here Wycliffe's view of consubstantiation will be compared to that of Peter Lombard, the Traditional view of transubstantiation. The comparison is done for the means of establishing Wycliffe's own starting point. Here his metaphysical schema will also first be established.

Chapter three will discuss the other half of the groundwork, which is Wycliffe's view of Ecclesiology. Both this chapter as well as chapter two will draw heavily upon *De Universalibus*, Wycliffe's starting point for his theology, being written almost a decade before the events that would end his career. Wycliffe did write a major tract on the Church entitled *De Ecclesia*, which will serve as the representative of his mature beliefs in ecclesiology. Chapter three will attempt to connect Wycliffe's view of the predestined as a universal to the political reality of the Pope.

Finally, chapter four will take the groundwork of the three chapters prior, assembling the bricks to show the parallels in Wycliffe's thought. This will be done through direct comparison of his Eucharistic theology and his Ecclesiology. Furthermore, it is evident that Wycliffe understood himself to be thinking along consistent lines across theological categories, so

evidence of this will be presented in areas beyond Ecclesiology and Eucharistic theology. This will provide additional credibility to my claim that Wycliffe is a consistent and rational metaphysician.

Chapter One

Historical Background

The latter half of the fourteenth-century may have been one of the worst times to be alive in the history of Western Christianity, if not the world. Between (1) the constant fighting, (2) the deterioration of centralized Papal power, (3) and the continued occurrences of the Plague, no one in western Europe was immune from what would be considered by most people tremendously inhumane living standards. This is especially true in England, where this chapter will focus its account on the historical situation that Western Europe faced in the middle to the late fourteenth-century. *Because of factors such as papal and ecclesial failings, the plague, rising nationalism, and the Hundred Years War, John Wycliffe's philosophical and theological proposals must be viewed in light of a world in chaos.* In the case of the papacy, English distrust stemming from new ideas concerning nationalism possibly led Wycliffe to be vehemently anti-papal. As for the plague, it may have hardened Wycliffe's resolve towards his studies. The Hundred Years War and the English losses during the Carolinian war likely made Wycliffe pine for the good old days of the Edwarian war just a decade prior. All of this would form how he thought and can be seen, even if in some cases ever so slightly, in his work as it has been received in our time.

English and Papal Relations 1348-1384¹²

The men who were often caught between the ecclesiastical and secular governments were the clergymen, who had a dual allegiance both to the pope and to the crown.¹³ This made clergymen such as Wycliffe extremely susceptible to the ebb and flow of political power. Clergymen existed under the constant anxiety of pledging allegiance to the English Crown or the Pope, who were regularly at odds and both claimed to be their benefactor. Thus, a thorough study of how this power was managed throughout Wycliffe's life will be fruitful for understanding the world in which he lived

English and Papal relations had been tense for all of Edward III's reign. Following the more amicable relations of Edward I and II with the Papacy, relations soured during the fifty-year reign of Edward III (1327-77).¹⁴ This was for many reasons ranging from the papacy being geographically headquartered in France, to suspected nationalistic sympathies for the French among the sitting cardinals. Guillaume Mollat highlights the English-Papal relations when he describes Parliament in 1376.

¹² John Wycliffe died December 31, 1384.

¹³ K. B. McFarlane writes: "Although all Englishmen served two masters, the ones who were most often made aware of their dual dependence were those subjects of the king who were 'the men of Holy Church' *par excellence*, the English clergy..." K. B. McFarlane. *The Origins of Religious Dissent in England*. Collier Books: New York, NY. 1952. 48.

¹⁴ Guillaume Mollat. *The Popes of Avignon 1305-1378*. Edinburgh: Thomas Nelson and Sons Ltd. 1963. 262.

The English were well aware that they were being deceived (in negotiations about the Hundred Years War), and in 1376 many complaints were made at the Parliament in London. The papacy was considered to be responsible for all the ills that beset England. This was the time of English reverses of French soil.¹⁵

At this point, the English had been losing ground Edward III had gained earlier in his military career.¹⁶ During his younger years, Edward III had re-established the Angevin empire of the first Norman kings.¹⁷ The decline of English success came in part due to the death of the King's eldest son, the Black Prince of Wales.¹⁸ For Edward III's entire reign, the English throne had no direct communication with the Papacy. Rather they preferred to communicate through envoy.¹⁹ Likely due to the fact that Innocent the VI organized peace conferences during the Hundred Years War starting in the 1350s which lead nowhere, King Edward III believed the Pope to be a pawn of John II (the Good) of France.²⁰ While this may not have been exactly the case, Mollat makes clear, the English people as represented by parliament were convinced of collusion between the French King and the Pope.²¹ Thus, at least the perception of a biased papacy is provable.

When speaking about the peasants' knowledge of State, Rollo-Koster notes that the English people were decidedly unaware of the goings-on at Avignon, specifically after 1378 and the Great Western Schism.²² Monique Maillard-Luypaert is ill-guided when she argues “suggesting that since the crisis touched important matters of faith, it was a daily preoccupation

¹⁵ Ibid. 267.

¹⁶ Anne Curry. *The Hundred Years War*. St. Martin's Press. New York, NY. 1993. (Chapter 3).

¹⁷ Ibid. (Chapter 1).

¹⁸ Ibid. (Chapter 3).

¹⁹ Karsten Ploger. *England and the Avignon Popes: The Practice of Diplomacy in Late Medieval Europe*. London, UK: Legend of Modern Humanities Research Association and Maney Publishing. 2005. 86-87.

²⁰ Joelle Rollo-Koster. *Avignon and its Papacy 1309-1417: Popes, Institutions, and Society*. Lanham, MD: Rowham & Littlefield. 2015. 93-95.

²¹ Mollat. 262.

²² Ibid. 274-275

for all levels of Society.”²³ The English people had little to no reason to be troubled with the minutiae of State affairs. This does not mean that there was no civil unrest. Civil unrest came at the end of Wycliffe’s life in a populist uprising known as the Peasants Revolt of 1381. It occurred because of the over-taxation, stagnation of wages and prices of commodities in southern England.²⁴ W .L. Watkinson would romanticize the event when he penned:

In the year 1381, the great insurrection of the peasantry in England took place. It was another example, of which History can furnish so many, of a wronged and long-oppressed people rising at last in wrath to avenge themselves upon their oppressors.²⁵

While Watkinson is not incorrect that in history overall, from a Hegelian perspective at least, there is an abrupt shift of power to those who have been oppressed, he is wrong in assuming that the English people had been long oppressed. Following English victories in the Hundred Years War, England had only recently begun to feel the effects of military failings. The French never even succeeded to fully push the English out of France during the fourteenth-century. Thus, the ‘long oppression’ written about by Watkinson was no more than a decade or so, and because of the low population was actually a time of relative abundance for most classes of English society.

Nonetheless, there was so much animosity towards the Papacy, a show of Nationalism resulted. The Pope owned a large amount of land in England from which he received benefices. This came to be understood by the people as giving money towards the French cause, among other misuses of the fruits of their labors. Because of this, the peasants sought out the young King Richard II to be their champion after his father’s death in 1377.²⁶ Interestingly, since this

²³ Ibid. summarized from Maillard-Luypaert, Monique. *Papauté, clercs, et laïcs: Le diocèse de Cambrai à l’épreuve la région d’Avignon à la fin du moyen-âge*. Rome: Ecole Française de Rome. 1980.

²⁴ George Macaulay Trevelyan O.M. *England in the Age of Wycliffe*. New York: Longmans, Green and Co. 1899. (Chapter 6).

²⁵ W. L. Watkinson. *Wyclif*. London: The Epworth Press. 1924. 167.

²⁶ Loc. cit.

happened after the great western schism of 1378, the Pope the people were rebelling against was not French but Italian. Urban VI was supported by England, the Holy Roman Empire and other northern European nations. Nonetheless, this was an anti-papal movement because of the influence the Pope had on the region itself. The French supported Pope at this time was Clement VII.²⁷

Returning now to the uncontested popes, the relationship between the English monarchy and the Papacy was strained because of the Pope's taxation of the English clergy. Compounding the taxation were various failed crusades, part and parcel for the fourteenth century which saw only one successful crusade. Unlike in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries where popes could rely on rulers to lead crusades to the Holy Land or another unfortunate place, in the fourteenth-century crusades generally, were money-making schemes for the Papacy and those who the papacy deemed worthy of receiving funds.²⁸ Acre fell at the end of the thirteenth century and no westerner would ever have a successful crusade again to the promised land. The failures of the crusades were epitomized by the titular ruler of Jerusalem resided in Naples as of 1378.²⁹ Because of the centralization of the papacy in Avignon carried out by John XXII, the propagandist preaching during the Avignon period would come under the purview of the papacy. This also was the time when benefices were controlled completely by the Pope himself, eliminating the nomination to ranking positions by other leading religious leaders of secular rulers.³⁰ This would be yet another reason for strained relations between England and the Papacy because of normal nepotistic practices on behalf of the Pope, who after John XXII were mostly

²⁷ Rollo-Koster. 242.

²⁸ Norman Housley. *The Avignon Papacy and the Crusades 1305-1378*. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press. 1986. 82-124.

²⁹ Rollo-Koster. 249. this would be Johanna of Naples.

³⁰ Ibid. 44-46.

French, specifically Limousin. By 1341, 79 percent of the college of cardinals were Frenchmen, raising to as high as 92.5 percent under Clement VI.³¹ In contrast, neither Edward II nor Edward III was able to push through an English Cardinal during their reigns.³² Therefore it is not unreasonable to see why the English did not trust the Papacy.³³

What does this have to do with Wycliffe and his theology? From this brief survey of English-Papal relations, as well as the descriptions of the Popes during Wycliffe's life to come, it is apparent the ecclesiastical authorities were misusing their powers in the eyes of Wycliffe. A correlation can then be made: if the papacy abused its power for its own gain, then it may also misrepresent theology to support its own agenda, profiting from proliferating lies.

Wycliffe lived in a world where power was abused for personal gain regularly. Seeing the vicar of Christ do this however, is a significantly more egregious offense. In addition to the vastness of the power the popes were misusing, there were also those who were benefiting from it. Being English, Wycliffe would naturally opposed France being benefited by the Pope. Furthermore, as seen by the distrust of the papacy so prevalent in England at the time, Wycliffe had no reason to support the Pope as a matter of nationalism. What he saw was the Pope getting rich off of English land and then using this to support France.

The Popes in Wycliffe's Life

During Wycliffe's life, the Papacy was dominated both by French interests as well as Frenchmen wearing the papal tiara. Wycliffe knew six popes during his lifetime, and only one of them was not French. Urban VI came from Italy, and he was challenged as legitimate mere

³¹ Ploger, 26-27.

³² Ibid. 28.

³³ Rollo-Koster will note that at the beginning of the Avignon period, Clement V was a master diplomat and not a French puppet (32-33). However even she would have difficulty supporting the premise that the later popes were incredibly influenced by french politics.

months into his reign. Considering Avignon bordered southeastern France, it is no wonder that England was suspicious of the goings-on at the Papal court. What is important to be established is the reasons for why nationalist Englishmen were necessarily anti-papal due to the politics of the papacy being dominated by the French. This no doubt would shape Wycliffe's thoughts on the role of the pope in the life of the Church, putting him along with his countrymen at odds with ecclesiastical powers.

The story of the papacy during the life of Wycliffe was one of vacillating leadership styles. Starting with Clement VI, the papacy was a grand court which amazed and stupefied visitors.³⁴ Born Pierre Roger he was a successful Church ecclesiast who had a taste for the grand and was from Limousin, the controlling regional party among the cardinals. He would reign from 1342-1352 and his papacy would leave the papal vaults empty for his successor. Popes like him typified who Wycliffe was rebuking for living in luxury.

After the death of Clement VI another Limousin, Etienne Aubert, was crowned Innocent VI. He was an old man and was expected not to reign for the decade that he did; however, he proved his detractors wrong and reigned from 1352-1362. His papacy was marked as being fiscally conservative, a staunch contrast from Clement VI's papacy. If this was out of lack of funds or personal piety is hard to say, but Yves Renouard seems to believe this to be true.³⁵ Under his reign, the English had their greatest military success against France during the

³⁴ Yves Renouard describes Clement VI as "...a Benedictine monk who had made a career via the episcopate to the red hat, but there any resemblance to Benedict XII ends... He was brilliantly intelligent, clear-headed, eloquent and affable; he was brave and showed courage in the Black Death in 1348; he had wide theological and legal knowledge, political experience, diplomatic skills, and charm; he was one of the most talented, able and remarkable men of his time: all this, and a style of life he had learned at the French court, was what he brought to his task as pope." Yves Renouard. *The Avignon Papacy 1305-1403*. Trans. Bethell, Denis. Hamden, CT: Archon Books. 1970. 42-43.

³⁵ Renouard. 48.

Edwardian Wars of the Hundred Years War, capturing John the Good (II) King of France during the battle of Crécy in 1356.³⁶ England would control much of western France by 1360 at the treaty of Calais.³⁷ Innocent VI is important to Wycliffe and English Nationalism because he would have been the pope of the ‘good-old days’, from which much of Wycliffe’s later rhetoric would stem.

After Innocent VI’s death in 1362, another Frenchman was elected to the papacy, however he was not from Limousin. Guillaume de Grimoard was crowned Urban V. His papacy would be one of failed crusades and nearly returning the papacy to Rome.³⁸ During his reign, there was seven years of peace, and only a year before his death did the Hundred Years War flare up again, with the Black Prince of Wales winning key victories in 1369 and 1370.³⁹ This also would have been the beginning period of Wycliffe’s writing, writing *De Universalibus* in 1368. It is notable that Wycliffe at this point is not anti-papal. Only after the death of Urban VI does he begin to rail against the powers that be.

After the death of Urban V late in 1370, Pierre Roger de Beaufort of Limousin was crowned Gregory XI. He was the nephew of former Pope Clement VI also named Pierre Roger. He had been groomed for the papacy, and would be the last uncontested Avignon pope. What is interesting about Gregory XI was how young he was when he was named a cardinal, only nineteen years old.⁴⁰ When crowned pope he was only forty-two, and while he was less ostentatious than his uncle, he still would have been living within and among the luxuries of the

³⁶ Ibid. 49.

³⁷ Curry. (Chapter 2).

³⁸ Renouard. 58.

³⁹ Ibid. 61.

⁴⁰ Rollo-Koster. 129.

papal court.⁴¹ It was under Gregory XI's reign that Wycliffe would turn decidedly anti-papal, which is unsurprising given Gregory XI represented the powerful pro-French Limousin party. Furthermore, French military victories were plentiful during Gregory's reign, with the beginning of the Carolinian Wars taking back much of the land the now old and dying King Edward III had won over a decade prior.

Under Gregory XI, Wycliffe would write *De Civilio Domino* (1377), *Responsio* (1377), *De Ecclesia* (1378), *De Veritate Sacrae Scripturae* (1378) and *On the Pastoral Office* (1378).⁴² If there was a pope that Wycliffe envisioned as wicked, it was Gregory XI. This makes a good deal of sense, Gregory was of the powerful Limousin Party, he was deeply involved in French politics, he was pope when the French were having victories against Wycliffe's benefactor John of Gaunt, and he was nothing like Pope Urban V whom Wycliffe likely associated with the halcyon days. In addition to all of this, Gregory XI in 1375 would not give Wycliffe the benefice he believed to have been promised.⁴³ Gregory also issued the papal bull against Wycliffe in 1377 that would bring his teachings on the Eucharist and other theological questions under scrutiny.⁴⁴ While it was not resolved under Gregory, it was at least initiated. In conclusion, Wycliffe did not support Gregory XI and much of his anti-papal rhetoric was aimed at him.

The final two popes co-existed because of the 1378 western Schism. Both Bartolomeo Prignano (Urban VI) and Robert de Geneve (Clement VII) would outlive Wycliffe. Roman

⁴¹ Joelle Rollo-Koster favorably describes the young pope as: "Pierre Roger was calm, humble, pious, and modest. Even his detractors, like the famous Florentine humanist Coluccio Salutati (1331-1406), praised "his prudence and discretion, his modest demeanor, his piety, goodness and affability, the uprightness of his character and his steadfastness of purpose in word and deeds." Rollo-Koster. 129. Quote from Guillaume Mollat. *The Popes at Avignon: The "Babylonian Captivity" of the Medieval Church*. Trans. Love, Janet. New York, NY: Harper and Row. 1965. 59.

⁴² Some of these works from 1378 were finished after the death of Gregory, however there is little doubt who Wycliffe has in mind when he is writing these.

⁴³ G. R. Evans. *John Wyclif*. Oxford, UK: Lion Hudson plc. 2005. 145.

⁴⁴ Ibid. 169.

Catholicism has deemed Clement VII an anti-pope, however, the reality of the time was that both popes had what they believed to be legitimate claims on the papal throne, and significant supporters to back them in thinking so. Both Popes had functioning ecclesial governments, Urban in Rome and Clement in Avignon. Both had monarchical support, with the Holy Roman Empire, England, and Spain supporting Urban VI while France supported Clement VII. The divisions were quite obviously based on politics, with Clement being put forward by the cardinals so that the Limousin party could remain in power (he himself was from Limousin). They voted him in under the weak pretense that they had been under duress from the Roman people who wished to have an Italian Pope.⁴⁵ However, it was common to have civil unrest during the installment of a new pope, and this is the only point in the history of the papacy where this was used as a means to attempt to dethrone a sitting pope.⁴⁶

As far as it concerns Wycliffe, it was Urban VI whom censored him in 1381, however, leniency was given due to his old age. This is interesting because Urban VI would have been the only non-French pope who Wycliffe would ever know (he was Italian). But at this point it is safe to say that Wycliffe was set in his ways, and while there may have been a brief moment of hope for him at the election of Urban VI, the issues he was facing had become more about the local political forces within the English Church than they were global. Wycliffe would die with Christendom divided between popes, both of which he would condemn.

⁴⁵ The chant used to 'scare' the Cardinals was "We want a Roman Pope - or at least an Italian. If not we will cut you to pieces!" Rollo-Koster. 241-242.

⁴⁶ Rollo-Koster explains: "The simple fact that no one doubted the validity of the election in the days immediately following it offers further evidence that the cardinals might very well have expected this violence. In their depositions against the pope, cardinals simply refrained from mentioning that they were familiar with "electoral violence." The carnivalesque behavior surrounding the election and the plunder of ecclesiastical property, accompanied by the pillaging of cardinals' residences and the cells of the conclave, are well documented from the third to the eighteenth centuries. Such a mob-like disorder was commonplace by the fourteenth century. Yet only in 1378 was such a claim of duress used to invalidate an election." Rollo-Koster. 247.

Summarily, the popes during the life of Wycliffe were almost all French, giving him warrant to question and reject their authority due to their political affiliations against England. Furthermore, in the eyes of Wycliffe they lived impiously and in the case of Gregory XI, ignorant of theological truth. They were men of politics whereas Wycliffe was an academic. Hopefully, this examination has established a pattern of abuse by the papacy during the life of Wycliffe.

The Hundred Years War 1337-1384

The exact dating of the Hundred Years War is nearly impossible for historians to come to a consensus about. However, Wycliffe would have lived almost exclusively under its auspices. The reality is that for the majority of the medieval period there were tensions between England and France, no matter the ethnicity of whoever resided in the areas that are now the nations of England and France. As is common with continued disputes tensions ebbed and flowed, with the Hundred Years War being a time of greater hostility than normal. That said, the period known as the Hundred Years War was not a constant battle that raged for one hundred years.⁴⁷ It too had a series of intense fighting with interludes of tentative peace, specifically three periods of intense campaigns. The portion of the war being treated here roughly overlaps with Wycliffe's life, with Anne Curry dating the beginning of the War in 1337, and is as good of a place as any to begin.⁴⁸ This means the war would have been an issue during Wycliffe's life since the age of around seven. Furthermore, living in the North of England, he would have been acutely aware of the

⁴⁷ Curry. Chapters 3-5.

⁴⁸ Ibid. Chapter 1.

Scottish militancy due to their alliance with France. However, as noted previously, there is no way to know if the young Wycliffe ever endured the struggles of war.

The Claim to the French Throne

The Hundred Years War begins with King Edward III's claim to the French throne over and against Philip VI, cousin of Philip V the recently deceased King of France. Since the time of the Norman Invasions, the King of England had to claim to the Angevin region of France, a considerable portion of France's western shores.⁴⁹ However, this meant that the King of England, insofar as this land was concerned, was a vassal to the King of France. Understandably this was a less than an ideal arrangement for the kings of England who were monarchs in their own rights on the British Isles. This would prove to be an issue for the young King Edward, as he did not want to place the throne of England under the throne of France.⁵⁰ Furthermore, he wished to retake the land that was by his claim, rightfully his as the closest living heir to Phillip IV through his mother Isabella.⁵¹ Thus in 1337, he began a campaign in France.

Edwardian War 1337-1360

Edward used a particular battle strategy when waging war in France: the *chevauchee*.⁵² In a way, this is similar to modern guerilla warfare strategies in that its purpose was to insight a lack of confidence in the native peoples against their current rulers. The armies of England would move from strategic points along the coast of France and attack, not remaining in an

⁴⁹ Ibid. Chapter 2.

⁵⁰ Loc. Cit.. While this is not strictly true, Edward was more worried about the symbolism.

⁵¹ Christopher Allmand. *The Hundred Years War: England and France at War c.1300- c.1450*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 1989. 9. In a rather convoluted way the French lawyers argued that Edward was ineligible to inherit the french throne due to his connection being maternal. This meant that Philip V, brother of Philip IV was the rightful heir to the throne. Yet it was not until Philip VI was crowned that Edward III began his military campaigns in France.

⁵² Curry. Chapter 3.

engaged battle for a significant period of time. This would, in turn, cause civil unrest among the people of France and make it harder for the king to defend his land. It further limited Edward's army's losses while maximizing the advantage of surprise.

On the eve of the outbreak of the first campaign, Pope Clement VI met delegations from both England and France in October 1344 in an attempt to ward off the conflict.⁵³ The English would not be satisfied with anything less than the French throne and the autonomous ruling of their lands in France. The French quite predictably, would not give up any land, nor give the French throne to an English King, and thus in 1345, the English began their campaigns on the continent.

There were three campaigns during the Edwardian period: 1345-47, 1355-56, 1359-60. The first campaign was likely cut short by the appearance of the Black Death in Europe. The notable English victories were the battle of Crécy (26 August 1346) and Battle of Poitiers (19 September 1356), where John II was captured by English forces and not ransomed until 1360. For Wycliffe this would have been the Halcyon days of English military might, and would be what he would harken back to during the Carolinian wars in which the English surrendered much land they had so recently won. Furthermore, he was likely made nationalist from having lived on the border of England and Scotland, with the Scots being allies of the French.

Carolinian War 1369-1389

While strictly 1369-1389, the Carolinian period would pass beyond the life of John Wycliffe. These two decades were a time of French dominance. Following nine years of peace after the Treaty of Bretigny (1360-1369), Charles V of France renewed hostilities with England,

⁵³ Allmand. 14.

from which it takes its name. King Edward III by this time was too old to go to battle, and the Black Prince was ill, and would die on 8 June 1376.⁵⁴ To make matters worse, the English crown had few funds to defend its land in Aquitaine, having levied heavy taxes in their aid to the King of Castile, Peter the Cruel, so as to return him to his throne.

This meant John of Gaunt, the third son of Edward III was called upon to continue the fight in France. John of Gaunt was Wycliffe's benefactor, and defended him before parliament when he was accused of causing civil unrest in 1378. He would prove to be less of a military strategist than his older brother, as well as not having the funds that the Black Prince once did.⁵⁵ He lost nearly all of the land England had gained at the Treaty of Bretigny. Upon the death of Edward III on 21 June 1377, the Black Prince's young son Richard took the throne as Richard II. However, he was too young to make war in France. The conflict would end in 1389 with the Truce of Leulinghem between Richard II and Charles VI, son of Charles V of France and this would hold until 1415.

As to Wycliffe's life and work, the time of his teaching would have been mostly during the Carolinian war. This means that as an English nationalist he would have had little to cheer about given the reclamation of English controlled lands by the French. Being a supporter of John of Gaunt he would have had first-hand knowledge of the defeats of English troops in France.

⁵⁴ Ibid. Chapter 4.

⁵⁵ John of Gaunt would continue to use the *chevauchee* military tactic, however, with significantly less effect. His army in 1373 was ambushed and he was forced to retreat, leaving him haggard by Christmas and incapable of effectively carrying out his battle plan.

The Black Death in England

The sheer amount of sudden death which surrounded him due to the plague, may have hardened Wycliffe's resolve. Born in 1330, John Wycliffe would live his entire adult life under the threat of the Plague. While the psychological effects of living amidst a creeping death that would claim the lives of up to half of England in four years (1348-1352), is beyond the scope of this essay, it is fair to say the way Wycliffe and his countrymen approached life would be different than people in modern times. Death was common place and could strike without warning, with some victims of the plague dying in a mere three days.

David Hurley notes four different modes of thought that would come about as a result of the Plague: (1) bigotry against social outcasts as well as indifference about loved ones, (2) an increase of humor and feasting, (3) university closings, (4) anti-clericalism with the rise of Flagellants as well as half of the clergy dying.⁵⁶ The final two had little to no effect on English shores.

Social Consequences

Possibly the most discussed of the social ramifications of the plague is bigotry against groups such as the Jews.⁵⁷ It is well known that during the plague the people of Europe believed Jews to have poisoned wells, killed livestock and generally have been the reason for the plague.⁵⁸ The logic for this rhetoric is simple: the Jews killed Jesus who is the Christ and therefore they are afflicting his followers in the same way. Ingeniously simple but a wild misunderstanding scripture. It does seem counterintuitive that when so much death is happening around one that

⁵⁶ David Herlihy. *The Black Death: and the Transformation of the West*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press. 1997. (Chapter 3).

⁵⁷ Part of this emphasis is likely not rooted in the issues of the fourteenth century, but rather is an anachronistic feeling of remorse stemming from the Holocaust of the twentieth century.

⁵⁸ Herlihy. Chapter 3.

they would seek to kill more because of that death. Yet, this would seem to be the case as people have anger from a perceived injustice, and this anger needs to be channeled somewhere. Where it was channeled in the case of Wycliffe was towards the Pope, in the form of anti-papal rhetoric.

Another striking social change was the indifference towards loved ones that occurred during the plague years. It is well documented that both parents and children would abandon one another so as not to risk being infected by the Plague.⁵⁹ Inadvertently this would help spread the plague, although it was not the only means by which the plague was spread. Socially, this would rip society apart as the family was the basis of Medieval society much more than in modern times. As seen in the politics of even the popes, nepotism was commonplace and not considered wrong. To have this bond so blatantly disregarded was calamitous. This steely resolve likely translated into Wycliffe's unfettered determination when it came to the Truth. If one was willing to walk away from loved ones for the sake of self-preservation, then it seems equally possible that they might seek meaning with the same determination.

A great example of this result of the Plague can be found in the writings of Geoffrey Chaucer (1343-1400). A close friend of John of Gaunt, Chaucer would have likely known Wycliffe as they shared the same patron, namely the aforementioned second son of King Henry IV. In his *canterbury tales*, Chaucer memorializes the lifestyles of all walks of society, from the loftiest and cultured of society to the least and most crude. As one reads Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales* they will find the notable and chivalrous Knight contrastingly paired with the debased and drunken Miller. What the Knight has in virtue, the Miller has in debauchery. A good summary of the Miller's unsavory yet humorous account comes at the end when he Chaucer writes:

Thus swyved was the carpenteres wyf,

⁵⁹ Loc. cit.

For al his keping and his jalousye;
And Absolon hath kist hir nether yë;
And Nicholas is scaled in the toute:
This tale is doon, and God save al the route!⁶⁰

What is seen is not the traditional chivalry of the court, but blue-collar and raunchy humor. This would have been presented likely at the court of John of Gaunt, who is one of the most powerful nobles in England and can be assumed to have been received well. There should be little surprise then, when Wycliffe challenged the papal powers that he seemed not to fear reprimand. If one can make raunchy jokes in the highest court in the land then a simple theological disagreement should also be permitted.

The closing of Universities was more of an issue on the continent than it was in England, with four European Universities closing. During the latter half of the fourteenth-century, Cambridge would found four new colleges while Oxford would found two.⁶¹ The toll on professors is rather easily deduced. Being an aged population then as now, University professors were some of the hardest hit by the Plague.⁶² This is why it is intriguing that six colleges were founded in England when professors were dying. However, there were some further ramifications other than universities closing. With fewer students willing to go to university, the schools of Europe had dramatically decreased enrollment.⁶³ This then caused funding issues and a spiral for the educational system.

⁶⁰ Geoffrey Chaucer. *The Miller's Tale* in *The Canterbury Tales*. arr. Peter G. Beidler. New York, NY: Bantam Books. 2006. 242 (664-669).

Beidler's Translation on p. 243:

Thus was the carpenter's wife screwed,
In spite of all his guarding and jealousy;
And Absalom kissed her lower eye;
And Nicholas is scalded on the bum:
This tale is done, and God save all the company!

⁶¹ Herlihy. (Chapter 3).

⁶² Zeigler (Chapter 16).

⁶³ Herlihy. (Chapter 3).

The Spread and Recurrence of the Plague

During the initial, and most fatal spread of the plague from 1348-1352, the diseases came from the closest points to the continent and spread westward.⁶⁴ The channel islands were hit first, then it spread to Kent, Sussex and East Anglia. After this it progressed along the south, hitting London and spreading to the western edge of the island in Devon and Cornwall.⁶⁵ Finally, it spread northward through the midlands and then up to Northern England where Wycliffe was from. Northern England was struck hardest in England proper with nearly two-thirds of its population dying.⁶⁶

Finally, when studying the plague, this was not an isolated four-year terror for Europe. Plagues would be common for all of Wycliffe's life, starting in 1348-1352, but then returning in 1361, 1368-69, 1371, 1375, 1390, and 1405.⁶⁷ Thus, there were seven outbreaks of the plague in Europe, five of which happened during Wycliffe's adult life. Wycliffe himself would have experienced most of them while he was in residence at Oxford. It is unclear if Wycliffe was in Oxford for the first outbreak. He did publish a short article in 1356 after having received his degree at Merton College. This is some of the most substantial evidence of the effects of the plague on Wycliffe, with the tract entitled *The Last Age of the Church*, in which Wycliffe at the time believed the fourteenth-century to be the end of the world. Wycliffe opens the treaty with the following:

⁶⁴ Ibid. (Chapter 7).

⁶⁵ Ibid. (Chapter 8).

⁶⁶ Ibid. (Chapter 11).

⁶⁷ Ibid. 205.

Alas, for so we greet the present sitting in the darkness shadowy of the deep, not having him that openly creep, all this will soon you announce me... But Joachur in his book of seeds of prophecy of the sayings of popes of the charges of prophecy, trying this matter, speaking of the rent of dimes, four tribulations do you prophecy have before said the serenity of nine chapters to enter into the Church of God.⁶⁸

It is quite clear that Wycliffe believed at this point that he was living in the tribulation from John's Apocalypse. While not overtly anti-papal, this proves Wycliffe thought about the effect of the actions on the Church and connected them to the plague and tribulation.

All of this is important to note because the events in Wycliffe's life affected his thinking. The plague made him believe in his younger years that he was living during the tribulation, the Hundred Years War and Papal disputes focused his understanding of power into nationalist directs. Even the fact that the population of England was slashed in half gives rise to the fact that he was able to succeed as much as he did at Oxford, furthermore, giving him the resolve to do it.

John Wycliffe 1330-1384

In her book *John Wyclif*, G.R. Evans presents Wycliffe's life as one of a troubled academic, fighting for his many causes against the powers that be. Upon reflection of Evans' own view of Wycliffe, it would seem she has made him out to be the modern version of an Academic struggling against power, armed only with the Truth and too small to shift the tides of power in his favor. In many ways, Evans has fallen into her own critique, which in general is an unavoidable result of ipsomorphication.⁶⁹ Nonetheless, and this is likely due to my own bias as a

⁶⁸ John Wycliffe. *The Last Age of the Church*. Ed. Todd, James H. Dublin, IRL: University of Dublin Press. 1840. <https://archive.org/details/lastageofchurch00wycl/page/n7> Translation from Middle English mine.

⁶⁹ Ipsomorphication is the all too human act of understanding something to be in one's own image. For example, a businessman might see all things as commodities from which he can turn a profit. It is through this lens that he views the world so when he is confronted with poetry he thinks about its marketability. Yet, it seems unlikely that all poems were written for their marketability, and likely few were. Yet because the businessman has

twenty-first-century master's student, I find Evans' telling of Wycliffe's life reliable and studious. It will, therefore, be the grounds of this brief biography of Wycliffe.

Wyclif's story begins with half-obliterated footprints. The evidence that has come down to us is full of gaps and uncertainties. There is no cozy nursery world in Wyclif's story. Little is known in his case about that stage of life which generally gets the reader reading from the beginning of a biography, the account of the childhood and early youth of the subject.⁷⁰

A young man with his way to make, Wyclif arrived in Oxford probably sometime late in the 1340s or early 1350s. The term began on 9 October, the feast of St. Denys. Boys would travel to Oxford in the company of a 'bringer' who acted as a human school bus and collected up pupils at points along the route.⁷¹

There is no telling exactly when John Wycliffe was born, nor even when he arrived in Oxford. It is difficult therefore to give the type of gripping childhood connection to Wycliffe's character, making him less appealing to the modern biographer in the historical evidence. There are no mythological childhood anecdotes, nor alluring Freudian analysis. However, the fact that Wycliffe was likely starting his studies at Oxford during the plague does allow those who wish to understand him to get a picture of what it must be like for the teenage student. As previously noted, over one-third of England died due to the plague, with the professors at Oxford being hit exceptionally hard. It is not then surprising that one of Wycliffe's earliest works *The Age of the Church* would be so fatalistically bent. Nonetheless, people who lived with Wycliffe, along with Wycliffe himself to some degree, were successful and had distinguished political careers in and out of the Church. Heretofore, it is not possible to say that since his entrance into Oxford was

ipsomorphized poetry he cannot see its empathetic value, just as a poet in his own way may not be able to see how poetry can or should be made to turn a prophet.

⁷⁰ Evans. 9.

⁷¹ Ibid. 17.

met with such a dismal display of death, that all who studied at this time were stunted or scared by what they were forced to endure.

Wycliffe on the Up and Up (1350s-1375)

After completing his bachelor's, which included those first principles of medieval schooling: Grammar, Logic, Rhetoric, Mathematics, Philosophy, Wycliffe could pass on towards the master's examinations. These are not a test in the modern sense of examination,⁷² but rather a fulfillment of requirements that needed to be fulfilled for the purpose of proving him worthy of a license to teach at Oxford.⁷³ For three years he would study, debating with his fellow graduates on pre-ordained subjects in the *scolaris* and *sophista*.⁷⁴ This would be the basis of his examinations, which in the first year he would practice the art of 'questioning' then move on to the practice of 'responding'. On top of this, he was required to give lectures under a master's supervision. At the end of all this, he would be presented to the chancellor of the university and being found suitable and qualified he would have a license to teach as a Master of Theology.⁷⁵

In 1360-61 Wycliffe can be found as the Master and Fellow of Balliol. This is proven true by a surviving letter that summons "Johannes de Wyclyf... to explain to the court why he has required pledges worth forty-eight shillings from Nicholas Marchaunt two months before."⁷⁶ Nicholas Marchaunt was Wycliffe's former landlord. Two other documents can prove Wycliffe's being Master of Balliol in 1360-61: the first is a deed that he signed as Master on April 7, 1361,

⁷² Ibid. 67.

⁷³ Loc. Cit.

⁷⁴ Loc. Cit.

⁷⁵ Loc. Cit.

⁷⁶ Ibid. 89.

and the second is his name in the Notary identifying him as Master of Balliol, John de Wykcliff.

77

For two years starting in 1361, Wycliffe was likely a parish priest in Fillingham, Lincolnshire. There is little known about this period of Wycliffe's life, although it was brief because on August 29, 1363, Wycliffe applied for and was granted a non-resident license for Fillingham, allowing him to return to Oxford.⁷⁸ There is a bit of hypocrisy here that he applies for a non-resident license, given his later accusations towards those who would seek to collect positions such as these in his later writings.⁷⁹ This was not uncommon for the day and would provide him further income while he pursued his studies. Nonetheless, his beliefs would inevitably change over the course of his life against his actions taken here.

In 1363 Wycliffe returned to Oxford and likely lived in rented rooms at Queens College.⁸⁰ Colleges worked in the fourteenth century by students and professors living in a hall. This would be their college. Lectures were given in the rooms of the hall, as well as a large common area was for the lively debates that are so common even today among undergraduates and graduate students.⁸¹ This large common area is where the term for the hall comes from. He would remain a fellow of Queens College from 1369-1375, putting his writing of *De Universalibus* as

⁷⁷ Ibid. It is here I draw my spelling of Wycliffe's last name as this is an official document. However, as one of the twenty other possible spellings of his name, this is as good of spelling as any.

⁷⁸ Ibid. 95.

⁷⁹ Specifically in *The Pastoral Office* (1379) where Wycliffe in his older years spells out how a priest should live. Evans (93-94) summarizes Wycliffe's view: "He has a three fold duty. The first is to feed his sheep spiritually with the Word of God, as though to introduce them to the fields of heaven through the perpetual greenness of the fields in which he feeds them His second duty is to purge his flock of spiritual scabies. His third duty is to defend his flock against the wolves which want to attack and hurt them." The last part of this could be interpreted as those who would seek to benefit from their benefices but not provide for the first two roles, although there is no evidence that Wycliffe was himself negligent in these duties.

⁸⁰ Ibid. 96.

⁸¹ Ibid. 36.

well as other key works, during his stay in these rooms.⁸² It was this book in 1372 that he was likely writing while he was being incepted as a Doctor of Theology, the highest teaching rank in the medieval university.

Between his stays at Queens College, Wycliffe was to be the Warden at Canterbury Hall, starting in 1365.⁸³ This was both a monastic and secular community of clerics, which made it unique for its day. As a secular cleric, Wycliffe had little support by way of cronyism as his regular monastic counterparts did.⁸⁴ This would prove to be a bone of contention for Wycliffe for the rest of his life. He was revoked as the Warden and was forced out of the hall for three weeks in March of 1367 when the Archbishop of Canterbury appointed John de Redyngate, a monk as Warden of the Hall.⁸⁵ He would return until he left for Queens in 1369. He left because Canterbury hall was becoming a predominantly monastic college and thus was becoming unsuitable for him as a secular theologian.

On July 26, 1374, Wycliffe was made a member of a commission sent by the pope for a delegation at Bruges.⁸⁶ This would prove to be the only time Wycliffe left England during his lifetime. It was here that Wycliffe worked out his understanding of Papal taxation. However, the delegation was a bust for English clerics and had better success during the second delegation which followed, to which Wycliffe was not invited.⁸⁷

⁸² Ibid. 97.

⁸³ Ibid. 105.

⁸⁴ Regular insofar as they were a part of a monastic order.

⁸⁵ Evans. 105.

⁸⁶ Ibid. 144.

⁸⁷ Loc. Cit.

Passed Over and Decline of Wycliffe's Career (1375-1384)

In 1375 Wycliffe was passed over for a preferment he claims he was promised by Pope Gregory XI in 1373.⁸⁸ His understanding of the matter was one of outrage and anger as Evans notes well.

Sir John Thornbury was the priest who obtained the prebend he expected and Wyclif calls him an idiot. An angry and disappointed Wyclif even seems to have claimed his enemies had gone so far as to denigrate him to the papal *curia* so as to get his benefices taken away, although this may have been in the more heated circumstances of the next few years... He was bitter. He almost certainly has the matter in mind in his book *On Civil Dominion*, where he points furiously to the way conflict of interest gets in the way of fair conduct.⁸⁹

While this may not have actually been the Pope's fault at all, because the benefice of a canonry was relatively straight forward, but as seen by his response he believed that the bureaucracy was to blame. This would be three years before the untimely death of Gregory XI but would be the start of Wycliffe's tirade against the pope and the papacy.

In 1377, at the convocation of the province of Canterbury, Wycliffe would get his chance to square off with the Church. Acting under the auspices of his new friend and patron John of Gaunt, Lord regnant of England, Wycliffe spoke and preached against papal taxation in England.

⁹⁰ His thesis was the Pope could not levy or collect taxes that the people or the government needed to defend themselves. This would be important because of the French influence of the Papacy and the Hundred Years War reigniting in the French's favor. Gregory XI at this point was ruling in Rome, but a considerable amount of the administration of the *Curia* was still taking

⁸⁸ Ibid. 145.

⁸⁹ Loc. Cit.

⁹⁰ Ibid. 162.

place in Avignon. With the events of the Great Western Schism in 1378 and the election of Clement VII, the question of papal authority would only get more muddled and partisan.

In May of 1377 Gregory issued Papal Bulls against Wycliffe, seeking that the powers that be in England should call him to account.⁹¹ The Pope condemned nineteen opinions, reminiscent of the Papal censoring of Peter Abelard in the Twelfth century.⁹² Being more of a subtle and nuanced academic, Wycliffe's response was not politically savvy, even if it was truthful. He continued to openly criticize the Pope, an action that would not fare well for him. Oxford was also put in a difficult situation of whether they should censor their rogue colleague and allow the Pope to have a say about the goings-on in Oxford or whether they should stand up for Wycliffe and close ranks. As for the government's response, with the King dead and the heir apparent also deceased, the reigning monarch was Richard II, a ten-year-old boy. This meant that the third son of the former King Edward III was now in control of much of the government. Thus Wycliffe was safe under the protection of John of Gaunt.

The Church responded before the college and summoned Wycliffe to Lambeth Palace. With the abrupt death of the then forty-nine-year-old Gregory XI and the ensuing debate over who was the next pope, Wycliffe seems to have fallen through the cracks.⁹³ On May 10, 1381, Oxford made its reply: Wycliffe and his teachings were to be censored as an attack on the faithful.⁹⁴ Evans notes that this could have been due to personal grudges that existed in the University at that time, with someone like William Barton coming to power and swiftly condemning his enemy and colleague.⁹⁵ Barton was a fellow secular. However, he had little love

⁹¹ Ibid. 169.

⁹² Ibid. 171.

⁹³ Ibid. 178.

⁹⁴ Ibid. 182.

⁹⁵ Ibid. 181.

for Wycliffe and his ideas. This meant Wycliffe was no longer allowed to teach his views. This was not aided by the peasant revolt of 1381, a populist uprising where Wycliffe's views of civil government were warped and used in defense of the movement.

After being condemned by Oxford, Wycliffe returned to his parish at Lutterworth in Leicestershire.⁹⁶ He would revisit his writings as well as publish significantly more before he died. Much of this is proof of his bitterness towards the pope and the *ecclesia*, but some of it was from pastoral compassion. This trend would continue until his death on December 31, 1384. Before his death, he had been summoned to Rome by Urban VI. However, citing his illness, he did not comply, and thus died in England a free but disgraced man.

⁹⁶ Ibid. 200.

Chapter Two

The Eucharist

John Wycliffe derives his doctrine of the Eucharist from his realist metaphysics.⁹⁷ Along with his rhetoric against the Pope and the established Church of the fourteenth-century, his Eucharistic theology would cause him to be posthumously condemned, his bones unearthed and burned at the Council of Constance (1415). Wycliffe lay accused of denying transubstantiation, the replacement of the substance of the bread and wine by the body and blood of Christ. This meant he was deviating from the traditional view of the Church as established in the writings of Lombard and Aquinas. In its place, he was in favor of what would now be called a consubstantiationist model. In this model both the bread and wine co-exist with the body and blood of Christ quidditatively after the words of institution. This belief - puts him squarely at odds with his time and yet also in step with it - caught up in the nuanced battles of medieval philosophy.⁹⁸ Indeed, because he so vigorously believed in the realist philosophy of his time, he was persecuted.⁹⁹

⁹⁷ Debates around how Wycliffe should be understood as a realist range from extreme to a man of his time. Gordon Leff in his academic career actually would switch from labelling Wycliffe as “Philosophical Extremist” to a well balanced theologian. The Modern trend seems to rightly find Wycliffe to be an insightful thinker whose understanding of realism should be merited as scholarly for his time. Leff, Gordon. *Metaphysics in Wyclif's Theology*. Studies in Church History Sub. 5. Kenny, Anthony ed. Oxford, UK: Basil Blackwell Ltd. 1987. 219-220.

⁹⁸ Jurgen Sarnowsky. *Natural Philosophy at Oxford and Paris in the Mid-Fourteenth Century*. Studies in Church History Sub. 5. Anthony Kenny. ed. Oxford, UK: Basil Blackwell Ltd. 1987. 125-134.

⁹⁹ While never excommunicated or banished from England, Wycliffe was forced to resign from his Oxford Post in Oxford after he began espousing his views on the Eucharist, despite promising John of Gaunt otherwise. Anthony Kenny. *Wycliffe*. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press. 1985. 1-17.

Wycliffe's Eucharistic Theology

The best place to start when understanding the Scholastic doctrine of the Eucharist is not with Wycliffe, but rather with Wycliffe's own starting point: Peter Lombard's *Sentences*. All masters in the fourteenth century were required to write a commentary on the *Sentences* as part of their studies.¹⁰⁰ The *Sentences*, therefore, became the basis of theological discussion for the theological debates that would rage. In his fourth book, Lombard starts out by defining a sacrament:

‘A Sacrament is a sign of a sacred thing.’¹⁰¹ And yet a sacrament is also called a ‘sacred secret,’¹⁰² the sacrament of the Godhead, for example, so that a sacrament is a sacred thing which designates the sacred thing which it designates. But what is now at issue is the sacrament according to its being a sign. *Also, a sacrament is a visible form of an invisible grace.*¹⁰³

What Lombard described would come to be the traditional definition to which western theologians of the late middle-ages would adhere, before and after the time of Wycliffe's life. However, Lombard's definition is rather ambiguous and undefined, allowing for a good deal of latitude in its interpretation. At first, he defines a sacrament as a sign, which he defines in the next chapter to be something by which another thing (*res*) can be understood.¹⁰⁴ Yet to stop here would be heresy, making a sacrament solely a *signa in memoriam*. Rather a sacrament is further

¹⁰⁰ Stephen E. Lahey. *Great Medieval Thinkers: John Wycliffe*. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press. 2009. 6.

¹⁰¹ Lombard here quotes Augustine's *De civitate Dei* 10.5.

¹⁰² Lombard again quotes Augustine, this time *Enarrationes in Psalmos* Ps. 103, 3 n14.

¹⁰³ Peter Lombard. *The Sentences Bk 4*. Trans. Giulio Silano. Toronto, ON: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies. 2010. (1) I.2 Italics mine.

Invisible grace in medieval theology is the concept that God imbues grace onto Christians, in this case through the sacraments. It is what was lost at the fall and is restored through Christ. While this essay does not explicitly discuss the issue of grace, because Wycliffe was more probing the philosophical questions of the reality of the Eucharist, this does have a place in the wider discussion of what is a sacrament for the medieval scholastics.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid. (2) I.3.

defined as a sacred thing signifying a sacred reality.¹⁰⁵ Hence a sacrament is more than a sign, it is a sacred sign, which becomes God's divine grace. Grace is widely accepted in medieval Catholicism to be supernatural grace. This is Grace in addition to nature functioning as to perfect a person in their fallen state. This presents a wide variety of possible metaphysical systems, in which would be the arena in which Wycliffe would present his ideas. It was also here where the philosophical systems of realism and nominalism would do battle.

Wycliffe assumes Lombard's definition as his starting point for his own eucharistic doctrine in *De Universalibus*. The Evangelical Doctor could do this naturally and assume his reader understood due to the general familiarity with Lombard's *Sentences*. Since everyone knew the text, he could take issue with Lombard without directly mentioning him. Lombard's original text reads:

And they assert that the said bread passes into the body of Christ, in such a way that where there was bread, now there is the body of Christ. - But if it is so, what then becomes of the substance of the bread and wine? *They say that either it is dissolved into the underlying matter, or it is reduced to nothing.*¹⁰⁶

Here is where the question of Universals enters onto the stage. What Lombard is presenting is a moderate realist stance on the issue of Universals, with the bread being more than a sign.¹⁰⁷ As discussed in the previous chapter, the rise of nominalism in the wake of theologians such as

¹⁰⁵ Aquinas writes about what is a sacrament in his *Summa Theologica*: "All things that are ordained to one, even in different ways, can be denominated from it: thus, from health which is in an animal, not only is the animal said to be healthy through being the subject of health: but medicine also is said to be healthy through producing health; diet through preserving it; and urine, through being a sign of health. Consequently, a thing may be called a 'sacrament,' either from having a certain hidden sanctity, and in this sense a sacrament is a 'sacred secret'; or from having some relationship to this sanctity, which relationship may be that of a cause, or of a sign or of any other relation." Hence for a moderate realist like Aquinas, and even more so for Wycliffe, a Sacrament is not an empty sign which merely points to another reality. It is related in cause as well as being a sign. Thomas Aquinas. *Summa Theologica*. III.60.1. Trans. Fathers of the English Dominican Province. DHSpriory.com. <https://dhsprory.org/thomas/summa/TP/TP060.html#TPQ60OUTP1>.

¹⁰⁶ *Sentences Bk. 4. (56) XI.2* Italics mine.

¹⁰⁷ Lombard's famous rival was Peter of Abelard, himself being a proto-nominalist.

William of Ockham made a conversation that had previously been dominated by the moderate realists of the thirteenth-century swing towards the denial of Universals in the early fourteenth century. When previously moderate realists dominated academia in the thirteenth century such as Aquinas, Bonaventure, and Scotus, it would come as a shock to the theological community to deny these foundational principles outright. These men did leave their mark on the Tradition of the fourteenth century, however, as noted above, the politicians enforcing this Tradition were less worried about theology being presented and more about ecclesiastical power and how it was used in Europe.

Wycliffe's Realism

Wycliffe would take this moderate realism and push it towards the more extreme boundaries. Realism for Wycliffe becomes the *de facto* lens by which all theology is understood, which is to say all metaphysical things have quiddity. The issue for Wycliffe starts with his understanding of the division of Universals. As he defines the predication (*predicare*) of a Universal into *per se* and *per accidens* he shifts the conversation away from non-quidditative signs.¹⁰⁸ Aristotle and the Nominalists define Universals within the ten categories of accidents.¹⁰⁹ By doing so they changed the universality of Being, making it only accidental, much to Wycliffe's disgust. However, Wycliffe rejected this reading of Aristotle, considering it to be a

¹⁰⁸ John Wycliffe. *De Universalibus*. Trans. Kenny, Anthony. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press. 1985. I.28-74.

¹⁰⁹ Ockham writes on the properties of substance "Aristotle only means that the common names of substances are predicated of subjects; nevertheless, of these same names, supposing as they do in the relevant affected acts, one cannot truly say predicate 'to be in a subject'." Hereupon he notes that the substance of anything is not the subject of it, claiming no primacy outside of the conventions of language. Rather, it is the predicate of the thing. William Ockham. *Summa Logica* I.43 (143) trans. Micheal J. Loux. Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press. 1974.

misreading and sophism by the nominalists.¹¹⁰ Against the argument made that a real universal cannot be predicated because it has no proposition in the world,¹¹¹ by definition, Wycliffe replies:

...for 'proposition' is equivalent, by its etymology, to 'something put in place of something else'; for instance, as Boethius says, a sentence put in place of the truth it signifies. The minor of the argument would be denied by a person who could establish... that the truth on the side of reality, which God puts together from the subject and predicate, is the real proposition.¹¹²

It is unsurprising Wycliffe looks to Boethius, who is a prominent supporter of Universals.

According to Wycliffe, it logically follows that although a Universal is not a material thing, that does not preclude it from having quiddity. In Boethius' conception of the universe all things emanate from God pan-theistically, and thus all Being is from God.¹¹³ This then predicates the existence of Truth on God and not the individual's comprehension of the material world, as was preached by the nominalists. Therefore, if the world is created by God, then there is *res* that is not material, much as God Himself is immaterial. These metaphysical *res* or Forms are Universal, existing *extra mens* from the human mind. For clarification, they exist *extra mens* (extra-mentally) because they are predicates of the mind of God and not of the human mind.¹¹⁴

¹¹⁰ Stephen Lahey agrees with my assessment of Wycliffe's understanding of Aristotle when he writes "Wyclif reads Aristotle as a confirmed realist, and rejects as obfuscation the Ockhamist desire to understand Aristotle as having abandoned Plato's realism. How could there have been such a long, reliable tradition of realism without Aristotle having bequeathed universals to us?" Stephen E Lahey. *Philosophy and Politics in the Thought of John Wyclif*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press. 2003. 82.

¹¹¹ What is meant by this is words only have meaning in reference to something that exists physically in the world. A name is only a name in so far as it names something. If it no longer names something then it ceases to be a name.

¹¹² *DU* (2) I.85-91.

¹¹³ Boethius would argue that participation in God was being, and that when humanity participate more with this *esse* it was becoming more real. Therefore, if God is being, then humanity emanates from God inasmuch as it participates with God's own Being.

Augustine would argue much of the same idea in his *De Trinitate* as he describes *idipsum*. "That which always exists unchangingly, which is not now one thing, now another. What is being-itself, absolute being, the Selfsame? That which is." From this all things participate in God's being by having being. Edmund Hill. ed. *The Works of Saint Augustine: A Translation for the 21st Century; Vol. V: The Trinity*. Brooklyn, NY: New York Press. 1991.98.

¹¹⁴ Here Wycliffe is not denying divine simplicity because for him all universals are causally related and rooted in God's Being Himself.

As for how these Universals are to be understood, Wycliffe leans on Grosseteste (1175-1253) in *De Universalibus*:

The first and foremost kind (of Universal) is the eternal notion of an exemplary idea in God. The second kind is the common created notion in the superior causes, like the intelligence and the heavenly spheres. The third kind of universal is the common form rooted in its individuals. This, says Grosseteste, is what Aristotle's genera and species are. Fourthly, there is the universal which is the common form in its accidents, apprehended by the lowest form of intellect. There is the fifth kind of universal -signs and mental acts- which Grosseteste set aside as irrelevant to his concerns.¹¹⁵

Kenny notes that this five-fold division of Universals is what makes Wycliffe a realist but not a platonist.¹¹⁶ The difference is that Wycliffe believes that no Universal exists outside of God's mind, which is a prerequisite for a platonic Universe.¹¹⁷ While universals exist extra-mentally for humanity, they do not exist as such for God. In a platonic universe, Universals exist outside of God, however, this is a pagan idea. Wycliffe interprets Aristotle through the Christian lense of Plato. It is by this Wycliffe sees himself to be an orthodox and faithful reader of Aristotle.¹¹⁸

Furthermore, it is important to note the descending order of the five-fold division of Universals. All Universals start with God and end with signs. Signs are the lowest and have no quiddity.¹¹⁹ This will cause problems for Wycliffe, because it is the lowest level which is being questioned by the nominalists, and from this, the upper levels are compromised. What Wycliffe has built here, although not alone, is a metaphysic that is intricately related to the existence of

¹¹⁵ *DU*. II.165-77 Interestingly this fifth type is what nominalists and realists agree upon. See Ockham, *Summa Logicae*. I.18.

¹¹⁶ Anthony Kenny. *Wycliffe in His Times*. Kenny, Anthony ed. Oxford, UK: Clarendon Press. 1986. 24.

¹¹⁷ "...in maintaining the reality of universals, Wyclif was arguing not for their independence as self-subsisting entities but at the constituents of individual substances in belonging to the totality of the universe." This universe being the creation of God, and predicated to the Lord by cause. Leff. *Metaphysics*. 220.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid*. 25.

¹¹⁹ *DU*. II.175-77.

God as Being (*esse*).¹²⁰ However, while supported by Tradition in some respects, this along with the Traditional understanding of the annihilation or absorption of the host after consecration will pose a problem for Wycliffe. Both lead to the obscuring of a universal.

As Wycliffe defines a Universal's quiddity, there is an intricate relationship between a species and its genus.

So someone who wants to be made acquainted with the quiddity of universals has to think confusedly and abstractly, by genus and species, of the same thing as the first thought of by means of a complex whose subject is the specific or generic term; thus the species of man is the same as there being a man, the genus of animal is the same this as being an animal.¹²¹

Here Wycliffe has found a quidditative value for Universals as being the same as their instantiations. Thus deductively, if an instance can be reasoned to be real, then its genus can be reasoned to be real also. This is the third type of Universal Grosseteste defined, and it exists in the mind of God, and it is known to humanity by its institution by means of its accident. What happens then to this real object when its genus is replaced by another Universal, namely in the Eucharist by the body and blood of Christ?

Wycliffe's Disagreement with Peter Lombard

Herein lies the issue of annihilation for Wycliffe, the former of Lombard's two proposed theories about what happens to the genus of the bread and wine. Wycliffe makes the intriguing argument that annihilation is not possible due to Christology and the existence of the universe itself.

God could not annihilate any creature without annihilating the whole created universe, which he cannot do because of Christ and the blessed. Hence it seems

¹²⁰ Aquinas argues for a realist metaphysics in *ST* I.44-48.

¹²¹ *DU* (21) III.89-93 When Wycliffe states "confusedly and abstractly" he does not mean that one needs to be confused, but rather that matters get more complex the more one thinks about genus and species. This leads to a blurring of the lines between things that might normally be considered distinct from one another.

that he cannot annihilate because every creature has created being in its first created analog, as is clear from what has been said. But that being, since it does not depend on any less extensive being, cannot be lost, while the analogous being remains. Therefore, no creature can in the total created being cease to exist, as long as the analogous being is preserved. Since then no creature can be annihilated as long as one of its created forms of being remains, it follows that no creature can be annihilated unless the analogous being, and therefore the universe is annihilated.¹²²

This rather long-winded logical argument needs to be laid out so that the ramifications of it can be seen and Wycliffe's Eucharistic theology delineated. Firstly, Wycliffe makes the bold claim that if a Form were annihilated, then God would be killing Christ and the Saints. If nothing else, there is a theatrical sensationality to Wycliffe's claim for a creative holocaust. This would work its way back to inevitably destroy the universe.¹²³ Functioning much like a line of dominos, the destruction of one genus would knock down the one above it, culminating in the death of creation. One universal causes it superior to be destroyed, destroying all underneath it to also be destroyed, and so it proceeds up the chain to Christ.

When one begins annihilating abstract existences from the universe, they are also annihilating in part that abstract Form's existence as it is predicated to that substance from which it is subject. More clearly explained through an example, if the abstract concept of man is annihilated from the universe, the animal must also be annihilated as its cause. Because man is caused by the Form of animal, to destroy part of that Form is the same as destroying the whole of it. One follows this regressive line of reasoning from animal to Being and they are left with the

¹²² *DU* XIII.164-175.

¹²³ Wycliffe continues with a conformational deduction: "A confirmation is this: for a particular to be created it is necessary for its species and genus to be created. Therefore contrariwise, for an individual to be annihilated it is necessary that every being superior to it is annihilated. For if the quiddity, which is the most principal part of the thing, remains, how is the thing annihilated, since it goes not into nothingness but into its per se cause." *DU*. XIII.176-184.

universe being annihilated along with man. Furthermore, since the universe emanated from God, God would cease to be able to communicate through the Forms, and grace would not be able to be meted out.

Now a natural response to this line of reasoning is to question that if a portion of creation is annihilated, why must the entirety also be annihilated? The counter-argument I would present to this could be mathematically stated by the following equation:

$$1 - (x < 1) \supset (1 - x) > 0^{124}$$

Yet this does not account for divine simplicity, in which all things participate for a theologian like Wycliffe. For Wycliffe, all *res* is ultimately metaphysically equivalent numerically due to divine simplicity. Thus the singular Form of man is equivalent to the singular Form of the Universe.¹²⁵ They are united in their numerical singularity. This means the destruction of one necessitates the destruction of the other. Thus, when one destroys the Being of the Bread and Wine, they destroy Being itself. When the substance of the host is transubstantiated from bread into the body of Christ, if the bread were to be annihilated then Christ too would be annihilated and the act of consecration would result in the annihilation of the universe.¹²⁶

¹²⁴ If one minus X where X is less than one, then one minus X is greater than zero. This assumes positive integers.

¹²⁵ This is how Wycliffe makes the argument “Thus, in the first example the subject is taken essentially for a thing of first intention, in this sense: Substance, which is most widely common to all the supposit of substance, is the essence of every donkey. And that is true, since the universal is essentially every one of its inferiors; all that this means in the context of the opinion is that it inheres in each substance that per se and quantitatively it is a substance.” *DU* V.15-24.

¹²⁶ This can be extrapolated from the Wycliffe’s trinitarian doctrine evident in *DU* V.88-91
 “Thus then the faithful grant that the three divine persons are not the same person, but are the same thing, because they differ one from the other even though they are the same essence. And thus we should not deny that of the threefold identity of the philosophers, namely, identity of genus, species and number, only numerical identity is identity, so that neither identity of genus nor identity of species is identity.” This essence namely being simple Being, which upholds the existence of the universe.

What then becomes of the substance of the bread and wine after the consecration if they are not annihilated? The other possibility laid out by Lombard is that they dissolve into the substance of Christ. However, for Wycliffe, this is just as much an impossible answer as annihilation, because if for a substance to be subsumed by another then this would defy the definition of what it means to be a Universal and particular.

The second way says that the universal is not any of its particulars since it is contrasted with a particular because it is common, or shared, or predicable, and is prior by nature and imperceptible by the senses and different in many other ways, as is clear in De Interpretatione, Chapter 2.¹²⁷

He gives an example to clarify his point:

In the same way, it is said that the bread and wine are not annihilated because they are converted into accidents... a logical argument can be used to the same effect, for if you posit annihilation, you must say that it is an accident distinct from the annihilator and the annihilated. But it is impossible for there to be an accident without a subject for it to characterize, as is clear even in the case of creation, where it is least apparent. Therefore it would have to be that annihilation was a characterization. But this is an impossible consequence. So there cannot be annihilation, for every imaginary annihilation would have to be instantaneous or gradual.¹²⁸

Wycliffe's point is rather simple. If the bread and wine are subsumed into another's essence alien to them, then annihilation itself must have quiddity, it must exist as a thing. This would then posit that the act of annihilation has a subject, the annihilator. All of this climaxes with the result that this is impossible due to the fact that such a thing could not exist. Non-existence cannot exist; it's a logical contradiction.

p ≠ ~p

¹²⁷ DU IV.46-50.

¹²⁸ DU XIII.192-193, 213-222.

Furthermore, one of the defining features of a universal is that it is not its own particular. Rather, it is the commonality of a set of particulars from which one has arisen. Wycliffe will use this logic to defend against the infinite men theory.¹²⁹ The argument follows that if there are two men—Wycliffe uses the example of Peter and Paul—then there are therefore three men. The third man is the aggregate of the former two. However, this then would create a fourth man, who is the aggregate of Peter and Paul and the first aggregate. This continues into on to five, six, seven, eventually going on into infinity. Wycliffe denounces this as mere sophist calculations, and that while there are indeed three men, Peter, Paul and the real aggregate man of Peter and Paul, there are no more.¹³⁰ He proves as such because that third man is not a particular man like Peter and Paul, but a common man of a different metaphysical substance. In addition, he answers the question of how Christ can be on many altars at the same time because he is the common Christ's Form particular in the instances.

Therefore, if the substance of the bread and wine are subsumed by the substance of the Body and Blood of Christ, then they lose their distinctiveness and quiddity. This defies the definition of a universal and again makes the entire doctrine collapse. Where does this leave Wycliffe on the substance of the bread and wine after the words of institution?

A direct statement on what exactly Wycliffe thought happened at the point of the institution is rather hard to pin down. Stephen E. Lahey, a Wycliffe scholar, writes aptly in his book on Wycliffe:

Philosophers generally like to have alternatives ready when they disprove long-held beliefs, and one wants to read that a clever philosopher like Wyclif came up with some sort of tenable eucharistic theory to replace transubstantiation. Unfortunately, aside from insisting that Christ is really present in the consecrated

¹²⁹ *DU IX.57-75.*

¹³⁰ *Loc. Cit.*

host, Wyclif did not present a philosophically developed alternative to what he angrily dismissed as ‘accidents without a subject.’¹³¹

The point Lahey is making is that Wycliffe was more of a contrarian than he was setting up an alternative philosophical point of view.¹³² Wycliffe did write a treaty entitled *De Euchariste*. However, his definition of the existence of the substance of bread and wine is not as detailed as other medieval authors and tends towards only a basic outline of consubstantiation.¹³³

Constructing Wycliffe's Eucharistic Theology

This gives the reader of *De Universalibus* and Wycliffe's other works the license to piece together something that might resemble a eucharistic theology, however in no way is this based on an explicit statement by Wycliffe himself. Looking outside of the immediate context of *De Universalibus*, a hint at what Wycliffe may think is going on during the Eucharist might be found.

Now you know there are three methods of predication - the formal, the essential, and the figurative. Passing by the two former, let us here attend to the third. It is according to the third mode that Christ, as I have before observed to you, calls John the Baptist Elias, (Matt. xi.) The apostle says of Christ... that he is a rock. And Gen. xiii., the Scripture asserts, that seven ears of corn and seven fat kine, are the seven years of fertility. And as Augustine observes, the Scripture does not say - are the *signs* of those years, but that they are the years themselves.¹³⁴

¹³¹ Lahey. 103. What Lahey means here when he speaks of Wycliffe's term ‘accidence without a subject’ is that the accidence of the bread and wine no longer have a subject. If one were to say take a bite out of Christ arm, they'd be remiss to think it should taste like bread and wine. Thus ‘where do these accidence come from?’ is Wycliffe's question.

¹³² To Dr. Vidu's point that one may not need an alternative point of view because the Eucharist is a mystery, this in itself is an alternative point of view, just one espousing ignorance towards the functioning of it.

¹³³ See John Wycliffe. *De Eucharistia*. Formatted Iohann Loserth Googlebooks. http://capricorn.bc.edu/siepm/DOCUMENTS/WYCLIF/Wyclif_eucharistia.pdf. Wycliffe sets out his plan of discussion on the Eucharist and in the chapters he is consistently taking the tone of a contrarian.

¹³⁴ Robert Vaughan. *Tracts and Treatises of John de Wycliffe D.D.* London, UK: Blackburn and Pardon, Hatton Garden. 1845. 148.

This comes from Wycliffe's work *Triologus*. In it, the person Wycliffe is responding too is his dialogue partner Alithia. He responds to Alithia as Phronesis or light, to correct what he sees to be the ignorance of his day.

By this reasoning, Wycliffe has established the possibility for two substances to exist in the same accident, not as equals, but neither loses its quiddity. This would be refuted at the Council of Constance in 1415 when the council decreed: “It is impossible for two corporeal substances to be coextensive, the one continuously at rest in a place and the other continuously penetrating the body of Christ at rest.”¹³⁵

Wycliffe’s view is furthermore bolstered by his then orthodox understanding of an atomistic universe. Lahey provides Wycliffe’s explanation as to why the world must be composed of indivisible moments of time. Extrapolating from the vacillating man theory, Lahey sets up Wycliffe’s exposé of the impossibility of an indivisible universe.¹³⁶ Imagine there is a set time of an hour. Divide this time in half, then divide those halves in half, continuing to do this *ad infinitum*. This is the Aristotelian view of time, where time exists on an infinitely divisible *continua*. Next, each half is given a number, with Socrates moving east on the odd-numbers and west on the even. When Socrates reaches the midpoint (which in itself is impossible to have been done given an infinite amount of direction changes that must occur), he will both be beginning to move east and beginning to be at rest. Lahey uses Wycliffe’s own words from *Logice Continuatio*:

‘But those who claim that a continuum is composed of indivisible - e.g. Time composed of instants, a line composed of points... say that it is impossible that any entity begins or clear to be except in virtue of the introduction of the present.’ [Lahey’s understanding] This means that any sentence involving “begin” or “cease” must involve a uniform unit of indivisible time.¹³⁷

¹³⁵ Found in Lahey *John Wyclif*. 103.

¹³⁶ Ibid. 116-117. This is a paraphrase of Lahey’s argument and is not original.

¹³⁷ Cit. Loc.

Taking this metaphysical framework, there is no possibility for Wycliffe to contradict the coexistence of the Bread and Wine after the “uniform unit of indivisible time,” which is the words of institution. Furthermore, given his defense of the impossibility of the annihilation of the substance of the bread and wine because of their causal existence *per se*, and the inability for them to be subsumed into the *esse* of Christ.

Yet, more can be deduced than simply Wycliffe being a consubstantialist from the aforementioned material. Rather, if one were to remove the medieval discussion of Forms and Accidents, a distinctly modern understanding of the Eucharist would unfold.¹³⁸ From his comments on the scriptural use of signs as being in themselves quidditatively real, it can be understood that Wycliffe believes those things instituted by the Word, and in this case, Christ in the Gospels, are quidditative sacramental signs. They do not lose their universal quiddity during the indivisible unit of time which is the institution of the Eucharist but also takes on the sacramental nature of Christ’s Body and Blood. Wycliffe is unclear as to how all of this happens, although it is unique to Sacraments that it does.

Wycliffe also gives a symbolic understanding of the Eucharist in his *Trialogus*. Heather Phillips summarizes Wycliffe’s optical understanding of the symbol of the Eucharist:

The host may be broken into three or umpteen parts, each of which is not really but habitudinally the body of Christ, as when a man looks in different mirrors and sees in each the image of his face, the same face is intentionally in each of them. The man himself has not actually moved. So with the Eucharist. The body of Christ is not moved.¹³⁹

¹³⁸ It is not possible to fully remove the medieval language from the thought of Wycliffe, however in the modern world, this language can be used to condemn medieval thinkers, and thus make them be cast aside without due consideration. Thus while the subsequent examination of Wycliffe’s thoughts will not reflect the language he used or the system of thought, it will show the applicability of the Evangelical Doctor’s theology and philosophy to the modern world, making him relevant.

¹³⁹ Heather Phillips. *John Wyclif and the Optics of the Eucharist*. Studies in Church History sub. 5. Oxford, UK: Basil Blackwell Ltd. 1987. 255.

This explains how the bread and wine can remain when also showing the real presence, quidditative and spiritual in the consecrated elements. They act as a mirror so by them the human being can see the spiritual reality that is Christ. It is important also for Wycliffe that the body does not move, because Universals, especially that of Christ, are stative. This for Wycliffe is what makes them Universal.

Conclusion

For Wycliffe, the understanding of “what is the Eucharist, and how does it come to be?” is bound up in the question of “what is a Universal.” Hence, when Wycliffe is discussing the nature of the Eucharist, he is drawing upon his understanding of Universals, as he lays them out in *De Universalibus*. Because he does not believe in the annihilation of Forms, Wycliffe is left arguing for the existence of the bread and wine of the Eucharist after the consecration. He also does not believe in the loss of the quidditative reality of the bread and the wine. He argues against Peter Lombard's two possible options of annihilation or subsumption, however, he never puts forward a clear doctrine of what is happening during the consecration.

For Wycliffe, if one were to destroy the substance of something, they would destroy the world because of the simplicity of God. Therefore given his beliefs he was forced to go against the teachings of his day, pushing back on the widely accepted moderate realist and nominalist beliefs.

Chapter Three

Ecclesiology

John Wycliffe's Ecclesiology does not come to the forefront of his theology until he is embattled with the powers that be over the charge of heresy. It is not that he has no opinions on 'what is the Church', but rather they do not seem to be deemed anything out of the ordinary until 1377 when he is raised on charges by the ecclesiastical authorities. It is at this time he wrote his nationalist and controversial book *De Civili Dominio* (On Civil Lordship) where he defends the rights of the State against the Church. The following year, after his *Responsio* of 1377, he wrote *De Ecclesia*, possibly his most complete and thorough treatment of Ecclesiology. It is from these manuscripts that Wycliffe's ecclesiology can be surmised.

Defining the Church

Wycliffe begins his definition of the Church from the traditional starting point of the Scholastic Schools. The church is trifurcated between the triumphant, the militant and the dormant realms.¹⁴⁰ He cites the reasoning for this as being in line with the threefold division of the temple.¹⁴¹ As this chapter is focused on the militant Church, this definition will remain in the

¹⁴⁰ John Wycliffe *De Ecclesia*. Arr. Iohann. L. Loserth. Wycliffe Society: London. 1886. 8 Anthony Kenny believes this work to be the first in what was Wycliffe's unfinished *summa*. This therefore puts a good deal of weight on the work even though it was written when Wycliffe's ambition was being thwarted. Anthony Kenny. *Wyclif*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. 1985. 68.

¹⁴¹ Lechler (Prof.). *John Wycliffe and his Precursors*. The Religious Tract Society: London, UK. 1884. 288.

background of Wycliffe's theology. While he does debate the questions of the Church triumphant and the Church dormant, these have little to do with his political struggles beyond being a part of the predestined faithful, which will be discussed at length below. However, predestination must be discussed for its importance in Wycliffe's theology. Professor Lechler writes:

...it (predestination) is one of very great importance, and runs like a scarlet thread through the whole system of Wycliffe's thinking - we mean the thought that the Church is nothing else than *the whole number of the elect*.¹⁴²

The Church is defined not by any particular member or members but rather by the whole. This composite Church will rub against the definitions as set forth by the powers that be, causing the disagreement between Wycliffe and the established ecclesiastical powers. With the centralizing power at Avignon, the pope has put himself in a position to make the existence of the Church dependent on him.

The Church as a Universal

This is the Holy Catholic Church by whom Christians immediately profess after the faith in the Holy Spirit is always three: first that which according to Augustine in the greatest creature. Behold, immediately being placed in creation after the Trinity. Second to love the Holy Spirit of Christ, perpetually copulating in matrimony. And thirdly, who inhabits the house. I ought to say from necessary suppositions by which I am consistent.¹⁴³

In the opening pages of *De Ecclesia*, Wycliffe begins his ecclesiology in a not so overly controversial place. He starts by quoting Augustine that the Church is the greatest creature.

¹⁴² Cit. Loc.

¹⁴³ *De Ecclesia*. 3. My Translation. The Original Text reads: "Hec est sancta ecclesia catholica quam confitentur christiani immediate post fidem in spiritum sanctum propter tria: primo quia secundum Augustinum est summa creatura. Ideo immediate ponitur post trinitatem in creatam. Secundo quia amore spiritus sancti Christo in matrimonio perpetuo copulatur. Et tercio domum quam inhabitet. Oportet dico ex necessitate suppositionis atque de congruo."

Furthermore, that the Church comes to be after the faith in the Holy Spirit. It is conceived as a universal by the Trinity immediately and imminently. While he does not use the language of universal specifically, it is easily inferred because he is discussing the time of creation outside of that which humanity can experience. The Church is therefore towards his third point the “temple or house which (the Trinity) inhabits.” This is because the Church comes about through the love of Christ which is the copulation of the matrimony of Christ to his Bride.

The Bride metaphor for Wycliffe at the beginning of this book compliments the motherhood of the Church. The bride of Christ is the mother to those who constitute the church. Regularly he mentions this ancient concept of the Church being the Mother to all who are within her. This is all doctrinally sound when compared to tradition, however, Wycliffe is using this as validation for the Universal of the Church. While the goal of this tract is not to weigh in on the Nominalism and Realism debate as *De Universalibus* did eight years before, it does assume Realism to be correct.

Further evidence of Wycliffe’s belief in the eternality of the Church, and therefore being a Universal, can be found further on in the first Chapter. Wycliffe writes in response to the challengers of Augustine:

(It is) in this way then why being able, then to know and then be benevolent, as is the uncreated Trinity, eternally choosing to your wife which finally is divorced? It is therefore clear for faith and the sign *which the name of the Church Catholic* which is all predestined present, past, and future.¹⁴⁴

Wycliffe here is referencing his own understanding of Universals, which the name of the Catholic Church acts as a sign of this eternal Universal. He asks a rhetorical question that since

¹⁴⁴ *De Ecclesia*. 5. The original Latin reads: “Quomodo queso tam potens, tam sciulus et tam benivolus, sicut est increata trinitas, eternaliter eligeret sibi sponsam quam finaliter repudiaret? Patet ergo ex fide et signacione *quid nominis ecclesie catholice* quod ipsa est omnes predestinati, presentes, preteriti et futuri.”

the Catholic Church is eternally chosen to be the wife of the uncreated Trinity, how is it that this Church will then be divorced by God? The answer is clearly intended to be no, because the Catholic Church is omnipresent within time.

The Church is from the first order of Universals. Wycliffe takes his understanding and ordering of Universal from Grosseteste.¹⁴⁵

The First is that one can list five types of universals, as Grosseteste explains in the seventh chapter of his commentary on the first book of the Posterior Analytics.
The first and foremost kind is the eternal notion or exemplary idea in God.¹⁴⁶

Thus, given the way that Wycliffe describes the Church as extending from God before time, the idea of the Catholic Church must be a real thing because it is an eternal notion that exists in God. Wycliffe is further assuming that the sign which is the name of the Catholic Church, is the fifth type of Universal Grosseteste describes, which nominalists would attribute all Universals to be.

¹⁴⁷ This however, he refutes as merely sophism.

Wycliffe goes on to state the Universality of the Church, along with a definition about what this means, later on in the first chapter.

Accordingly, the conclusion follows that from the quiddity of the Mother Church is that it is only one, just as there are not many Catholic Churches. It is demonstrated as such: "It therefore which is the Church Universal as Catholic, which thus contains in herself all predestination. It is not possible that either one (Catholic and Mother Church) is alone, nor that either one is Universal. Now

¹⁴⁵ The importance of Grosseteste on Wycliffe's thought is foundational. He is one of the most quoted authorities for Wycliffe. L. J. Daly has this to say about the hereditary relationship between Grosseteste and Wycliffe: "Then there is Robert Grosseteste (1175-1253), Bishop of Lincoln, who has been called the founder of the 'Oxford School.' He is one of Wyclif's most quoted authorities... The pope is the supreme head, and the more elevated ones rank the greater should be one's submission to him. Nevertheless, although the pope is all-powerful on earth, he is not a despot. If the Holy See should abuse its power, Grosseteste would refuse to obey." This explains Wycliffe's inevitable disagreement with the pope, having him lean on Grosseteste's own opinion of the Pope's power. L. J. Daly. *The Political Theory of John Wyclif*. Chicago, IL: Loyola University Press. 1962. 6-7.

¹⁴⁶ Wycliffe, John *De Universalibus*. Trans. Kenny, Anthony. Clarendon Press: Oxford. 1985. 13.

¹⁴⁷ Cit. Loc.

according to philosophy, *a Universal is something total and perfect which does not cease to be.*¹⁴⁸

Wycliffe's goal here is to show that what constitutes the catholic Church quidditatively is something eternal. Therefore something that is not quidditatively eternal, such as a pope, could not be what makes the Church essentially itself. The Pope cannot be quidditatively eternal because he is mortal by being human. Here is where he will ruffle more than a few feathers. The unity of the Church precludes it from being one of many Churches because it is singular as a Universal. If there were more than one Church, this would violate what it means to be a Universal.

Christ as the Head of the Church

Wycliffe is building this framework for a particular purpose, which is to prove Christ as being the head of the Church and not the Pope. However, before looking at the text, a cursory note of reminder is important when discussing the papacy. Gregory XI, then pope, died on March 27th, 1378. Knowing Wycliffe's disagreement with the late pope and the ecclesiastical authorities, the onus for his denouncement of the Pope, all be it additionally for national reasons, cannot be attributed to the great Western Schism of November 1378. Wycliffe likely found this horrific management of the Papacy supportive of his claims, however, they were not the reason why he protested in the first place. His protesting of the Church came about for the theological and ethical issues associated with the papacy, and specifically those avignonese popes whom he lived and served under. Thus he makes this statement about the Pope:

¹⁴⁸ *De Ecclesia*. 7-8. Original latin reads: "Secunda conclusio sequens ex quiditate matris ecclesie est quod tantum est una, sic quod non multe ecclesie catholice. Demonstratur sic: Eo ipso quod est ecclesia universalis sive catholica, ipsa continet in se omnes predestinatos. Non est possibile quod sit nisi una talis, igitur non est possibile quod sit nisi una universalis ecclesia. Nam secundum philosophos *universale est quoddam totum atque perfectum cui nichil deest.*

From this follows some other conclusions. First, that no vicar of Christ should presume to assert himself to be the head of the Holy Catholic Church, indeed neither has he had special revelation, nor can he assert himself to be anything other than its members. It appears from this that the head of this Church is shown to be above all the wise angels, with them being a member of this church, which Christ alone is able to befit between all the predestined, as put in Hebrews 1.4. Also Romans 1.2, it is said that Christ is *to be predestined*, and as the Church is alone the number predestined. Therefore as the man without special revelation can not assert without from that he is predestined, also he cannot assert he is to be a member, and consequently, is not the head of the Church.¹⁴⁹

The logic is simple, because the Vicar of Christ, i.e. the Pope, is a member of the Church, he cannot presume to be the head of a body in which he is a member. It is as much to say a hand cannot be a head. Wycliffe asserts that this is both unbiblical as he quotes Hebrews and Romans, as well as illogical. He furthermore refutes the idea that somehow the Pope could have received special revelation about this because then that special revelation would contradict scripture. No special revelation could contradict God's initial Revelation that is found in the bible or this would make God contradictory and therefore would be heresy.

In addition to this, Wycliffe denies the Universality of the Roman Pontifex being the head of the Church. He argues:

The fifth conclusion is this: "subsisting under the Roman Pontifex is necessary for all human nature's salvation." *It is clear from this that he neither is able to save nor merits subsistence in Christ; but that the Roman Pontifex is as the universal head to any particular church, I therefore conclude. Now Columba says on the way of the journey, which is according to a part, is therefore for the same. This is the Roman Church, which is according to its part. Therefore it is not rational to say that the sojourning or tribulating (church) is not according to its part. And it is*

¹⁴⁹ *De Ecclesia*. 5. The original reads: "Ex istis sequuntur aliquae conclusiones. Prima, quod nullus vicarius Christi debet presumere asserere se esse caput ecclesie sancte catholice, ymmo nisi habuerit specialem revelacionem, non asseret se esse aliquod membrum eius. Patet ex hoc quod capitalem illius ecclesie oportet esse super omnes angelos beatos, cum ipsi sint membra illius ecclesie, quod soli Christo potest competere inter omnes predestinationatos, ut patet Heb.1,4. Nam Rom. 1,4 dicitur *Christum esse predestinatum*; et sic ecclesia est solum numerus predestinationatorum. Sicut igitur homo sine speciali revelacione non assereret sine formidine se esse predestinatum, sic nec assereret se esse membrum, et per consequens, non caput illius ecclesie.

the same for those that inhabit Rome, England or whatever place of the faith. Then if wherever the pope is, there is the Roman Church, which made the Church and Rome being taught by the succeeding apostles from whichever faith, for the same Roman Church as in England and wherever is the Christian faith, which is the holy Catholic Church, and is not able to be constricted according to himself total in Rome or certain Popes and Cardinals; but expanded for the three holy places, namely heaven, the place of sojourning and purgatory.¹⁵⁰

Wycliffe's argument is simple and yet profound. What he notes is that the head of the Church is not the totality of the Church, but rather that the head who is the Pope is the head of the particular Church, namely the Roman Church of a given time. This means that the Pope's power does not extend past the boundaries of his own Church, which for Wycliffe would not include the Anglican Catholic Church. Catholicity is not measured by Rome, in her Popes and Cardinals, but rather is under the head of Christ, and covers the three holy places: Heaven, earth, and purgatory. Wycliffe has thus challenged the authority of the Pope over the entire Catholic Church.

This is certainly a departure from the rhetoric of the day, where the Pope was seen to be both the temporal authority of the lands which he owned, but also the spiritual authority over all of Christendom. However, Wycliffe refutes the basis of this claim, going to the root of the two sword theory.

The fourth conclusion of the decree is that within the professing Church is the one of the sword and which is able to know the body either as temporal or spiritual; therewith both giving concern to the head of the Church and the vicar... And this

¹⁵⁰ Ibid. 14-15. The Original reads: *Quinta conclusio est ist: Subesse Romano pontifici omni humane nature est de necessitate salutis. Patet ex hoc quod nemo potest salvari, nisi meritorie subsit Christo; sed ipse est Romanus pontifex sicut est caput universalis ac cuiuslibet particularis ecclesie: ergo conclusio. Nam columba dicitur modo viatrix, quia secundum partem, igitur per idem: ipsa est Romana ecclesia, quia secundum partem. Non enim est ratio, quare ipsa modo peregrinatur vel tribulatur nisi quod secundum partem. Et per idem ipsa inhabitat Romam, Anglicam et quemcunque locum fidelem. Nam si ubicunque papa fuerit, ibi est Romana ecclesia, quia eadem ecclesia que Rome edificatur per apostolos succedens ex quibuscunque fidelebus, per idem ecclesia Romana sic est in Anglia et ubicunque fuerit fidelis christianus, quia sancta ecclesia catholica; que non potest stringi secundum se totam in Roma vel cetum pape et cardinalium; sed distenditur per tria loca sancta, scilicet celum, locum peregrinationis et purgatorium.*"

is shaped in Luke 22.38 when the apostle's response "see these two swords" Christ said not too much and not too little but "it is enough." Whence, to denote which other and the other sword made Peter stretch out, consequently Christ said to Peter inquiring his pontifical servant: "send your sword in the sheath."¹⁵¹

The jarring point that Wycliffe makes is that the sword which the first pope holds, namely Peter, is sheathed upon Christ's request. While many modern scholars might revile this highly analogous reading of Luke 22, Wycliffe is simply using the argument of the papacy against itself. The power to uphold justice with violence is given to the kings, and therefore the power of the Church does not have that right. He also is contradicting Leo the great, the author of the two sword theory.

From all of this, Wycliffe draws the conclusion that if the head of a particular Church claims to be the head of the Universal Church, then it would be to create a multi-headed monster with Christ.¹⁵² Rather Wycliffe argues for the proper functioning of Logic and Scripture.

But it (the decretals) ought to negate the opinions of major parts of sacred scripture and certain great sacraments of Christ and also further (negate) the Church of whom the Apostles spoke of in Eph. 5.32. Thus, as ought to be said, to deny all the particular church, with particular not said either in comparison to the total and universal. Behold, to deny the universal and total Church will be to deny the particular church. Another teaching will be that God knows a thousand universal churches: this is the greatest heresy, which not only is against the Church but also destroys all the church and his (Christ's) singular law.¹⁵³

¹⁵¹ Ibid. 13. Original reads: "Quarta conclusio eiusdem decretalis est quod intra precitam ecclesiam est uterque gladius vel potestas scilicet corporalis vel temporalis et spiritualis; quorum uterque debet ad caput ecclesie et eius vicarium prestinare... Et hoc gifuratum est Luce XXII, 38, quando apostolis responsetibus *ecce duo gladii hic* Christus dixit non superfluum vel diminutum sed *satis est*. Unde ad denotandum quod uterque gladius fuit Petro pertinens, consequenter dixit Christus Petro fuit Petro pertinens, sonsequenter dixit Christus Petro percucienti servum pontificis: *Mitte gladium tuum in vaginam*.

¹⁵² Ibid. 17.

¹⁵³ Ibid. 20. Original reads: "Sed oportet sic opinantes negare miaorem partem scripture sacre et specialiter *magnum sacramentum* de Christo atque ecclesia de quo loquitur apostolus Ephasiis V, 32. Immo oportet sic loquentem negare commem particularem ecclesiam, cum particulare non dicitur nisi in comparacione as toale et universale. Ideo negata universali et totali ecclesia neganda foret quelibet particularis ecclesia, vel aliter dicendum foret quod Deus cognoscit mille universales ecclesias: quod esset summe hereticum, quia nedum sentiret contra ecclesiam sed omnino destrueret ecclesiam et singulas leges eius.

Wycliffe notes that if the Pope indeed is the head of the Universal Church, this would not only destroy what it means to be universal but furthermore destroy the unity of the Universal Church. This would cause many Churches, and the heresy would be Christ would have to die for these thousands of Churches, which is untrue because Christ died only once. If Christ needed to be sacrificed multiple times then the simplicity of God would be in question. However, Wycliffe does not directly raise this point.

Here Wycliffe also uses a term unique to him for his time, which is the law of Christ. The ‘singular law’ of Christ is the Law he invoked and laid down with his death on the Cross. The concept of the ‘law of Christ’ may sound odd to modern ears who are more used to the Lutheran comparison of ‘Law and Gospel’, however, for Wycliffe this functions in a similar but not identical way. The law of Christ is a liberating law, unlike that of the Old Testament. It is unified and the entire Church falls under it, making it singular and authoritative law.

The Predestination of the Church

In all that is to be seen which hints to God with his Creatures, in all this to be joking, with creatures no more able to do or move, and which the artificial image of God jokes, when Isaiah says, that great branding of God divides. *And just as we are made to see, what God necessarily then predestines man with pre knowing.*¹⁵⁴

Here begins a theme for Wycliffe that is present in most medieval writers, however, is unique to him in the way he presents it. Wycliffe’s understanding of predestination is a logical one that allows for free-will although affirming pre-knowing. As he notes above in the *Trialogus*, God predestines man by his pre-knowing, however, he does not dictate his actions so as to make man a robot under God’s control. In response to Bradwardine, and in agreement with Aquinas, Wycliffe holds to a doctrine of predestination that allows for the individual to exercise free-will

¹⁵⁴ John Wycliffe. *Trialogus*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 2013. 121.

who is also fulfilling the divine plan.¹⁵⁵ However, there is a cosmic joke that humanity is completely free, but God completely knows all that will happen. Stephen Lahey gives an apt example:

Consider the following argument:

1. If God eternally knows that Peter sins today, then Peter sins today
2. God eternally knows that Peter sins today.
3. Therefore, Peter sins today.

Statement 1 is eternally true and would be logically unavoidable, no matter what. This is an instance of absolute necessity because it is connected to the necessity of divine omniscience (A.1). Likewise, the argument formed by combining 1 and 2 leads directly to the conclusion according to *modus ponens*. This argument is both valid and true by absolute necessity from eternity, according to Wycliffe's understanding of the nature of logic. All eternity, according to Wycliffe's understanding of the nature of logic. All logical, mathematical, and geometric truths are absolutely necessary (A.2).¹⁵⁶

God does not cause Peter to sin, he merely knows to demonstrate his omniscience. Peter thus sins of his own free will and God pre-knew his sin and therefore predestined it by means of his knowledge. This is important in regards to the Vicar of Christ because God predestined Christ to be the head of the Church.¹⁵⁷

Micheal Wilks describes the relationship between the body of Christ and the Church, and how that is formulated by Wycliffe according to his ontology.

All things belong to Christ, who is the aggregate person (*persona aggregata*) of the elect, to the Church in the sense of that abstract reality, the *Ecclesia Praedestinatorum* or Church Triumphant.¹⁵⁸

¹⁵⁵ Stephen E. Lahey. *Great Medieval Thinkers: John Wycliffe*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. 2009. 178.

¹⁵⁶ Ibid. 180.

¹⁵⁷ *De Ecclesia*. 5.

¹⁵⁸ Michael Wilks. *Predestination, Property, and Power in Studies in Church History 2 (1965)*. Oxford, UK: Oxbow Books. 2000. 28.

The Church is an aggregate person who is Christ ontologically. Thus, if the Vicar of Christ is the head of the Church along with Christ then this eternally true statement of Christ being the head of the Church is impinged upon by the Pope, causing a man who is only human to become eternal. This creates the logical issue for Wycliffe by *modus tollens*:

- (p) The head of the Church is Eternal,
- (~q) the Vicar of Christ is Mortal by nature of being human,
- ∴ (~p) the Vicar of Christ is not the head of the Church.¹⁵⁹

I have assumed here that mortal is the opposite and therefore is contradictory to eternal.¹⁶⁰

Wycliffe himself writes about predestination in the following way:

This predestination is the principal gift of God, most freely given since no one can merit his own predestination. Since it cannot be present without being present at the first moment of existence of the predestinate, it follows from what is commonly said of the grace that this is the principal grace... It can never be lost, since it is the basis of glory and bliss, with equally cannot be lost.¹⁶¹

Hence the Church cannot cease to be the Church, in all her glory and bliss, when that which claims to be her head dies. Predestination is the principal grace because it affirms one's participation within the Church and also establishes the Church for all eternity. This passage, therefore, acts as a thickening in the understanding of what it means to be the eternal Church, which is the basis for the first point in Wycliffe's logical structure.¹⁶²

¹⁵⁹ I have assumed here the traditional *Modus Ponens* (p) All men are mortal, (q) Socrates is a man, Therefore all men are mortal.

¹⁶⁰ (p) Eternal beings live forever, (~q) Mortal beings do not live forever, therefore Mortals are not eternal.

¹⁶¹ *De Ecclesia*. 39 trans. Anthony Kenny. Found in Anthony Kenny. *Wyclif*. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press. 1985. 69.

¹⁶² On this subject, Stephen Lahey writes: "From our discussion on Wyclif's thought on the types of universals, we can classify 'Being' as the most primary of universals by community. Wycliffe believed that God's *dominium* over 'Being' is necessary for any successive divine *dominium* over more speciated universals by community." Stephen E. Lahey *Philosophy and Politics in the Thought of John Wyclif*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press. 2003. 93.

The Political Ramifications

How Wycliffe chooses to define the Church will have a good deal of influence on his politics. It will bring him into conflict with the Pope himself along with the entire might of the Church. This is not an unheard-of occurrence in medieval academia. Ockham had done it years before. However, it still is significant because of the issues he struggled with the established Church of his time. Wycliffe having been passed over for advancement was none too happy with his superiors, and while this is not the sole reason he believed what he believed, it only made it worse for an otherwise disgruntled academic.

The Church of Wycliffe's time were moderate realist, holding mostly to the theology written a century prior. In reality the theology was more used for politics than theology *par excellence*. Nominalism was confined mostly to the academy, being tolerated by the Church authorities. Wycliffe's battle therefore was with fellow realists who happen to disagree with the extremity to push their philosophy.

The Pope is not the Head of the Church

Moving on from the question of is Christ the head of the Church, Wycliffe raises the then political question of 'is the pope the head of the Church?' The answer for the late fourteenth century would have been yes, however the metaphysics of this are difficult. The Popes managed to bypass the awkwardness of this situation by claiming that Papal decretals are more authoritative than metaphysics, however, Wycliffe will naturally challenge this apparent anti-intellectualism.¹⁶³ Wycliffe bluntly declares that it does not matter if one needs to be

¹⁶³ *De Ecclesia*. 26.

obedient to the cardinals, or if decretals are published, these cannot supersede either logic or metaphysics.¹⁶⁴ Logic and Metaphysics are Universal faculties. An academic's academic if there ever was one.

Thus, from this demand of logic and metaphysical reasoning from an authority, Wycliffe constructs an argument against the theory of the Popes being the aggregate head of Church.

But to be able to respond to this threefold: first that Christ and the all the vicars who succeeded him are one aggregate head, but none are themselves through themselves. Nevertheless, I do not believe another Catholic (Church's) healthy head to be as this, (as the pope being the eternal head) which then is to negate Christ to be the head of the Universal Church, but one aggregate who will be Christ parts, and as integrated (into) the body of Christ, so as not to have Christ's head. This I think is not a small heresy but rather a blasphemy. Similarly, when Christ's head let it be all the multitudes of vicars themselves and this head all reside, to be seen with them who are the arch-head completely of the Church and not themselves. Therefore to be called the head of the mother Church which is not in communion with the members of the body in nature than singular, which then to have the Church neither great nor monstrous head. This is perfectly repugnant of the creator, and if his head will be only aggregate, in above no pope will be the head of this Church.¹⁶⁵

This returns once more to his original claim that two men when combined form an aggregate who is, in fact, a third man.¹⁶⁶ However, Wycliffe protests this understanding of the head of the Church, because it is to elevate one of the members to be the head, who is Christ. The Pope as a human being is a member of the Catholic Church, submissive to Christ. He is not part of the

¹⁶⁴ Loc. Cit.

¹⁶⁵ Loc. Cit.

¹⁶⁶ *De Universalis* IX.57-75 Wycliffe at this junction is quick to point out that while Peter and Paul make an aggregate third man, namely Peter *and* Paul, this aggregate does not make a fourth man. There is no fourth man who is {Peter}, {Paul}, {Peter *and* Paul}, and therefore is {Peter, Paul, Peter *and* Paul}. Wycliffe renounces this as a mere sophism, and meant only for those who wish to get caught up in unreal logic.

aggregate form of the head being numbered with Christ as somehow equal or at least sharing in part.¹⁶⁷

It would seem Wycliffe's argument, although muddled and at times confusing, follows two lines of reasoning. (1) The uniqueness of Christ's headship is defined by his metaphysical simplicity, contrary to an aggregate head which cannot function simply. (2) As Christ is both perfectly God and Man, the spiritual union of an aggregate head would violate the humanity of Christ. The first Wycliffe states rather confusedly when he notes that "First through this which only in participation not having been made a distinct person and head, and as the mother Church to have a thousand heads."¹⁶⁸ Wycliffe's point is that when a realist aggregate is formed, it cannot replace the still real parts of the aggregate. Therefore the aggregate head of {Christ and the Popes} is the logical predicate of the existence of {Christ} and each individual {Pope} who came before. Thus, the head of the Church would be both the aggregate head, as well as all the individual heads, making it a monster. This denies the simplicity of Christ as the head of the Church and furthermore elevates those who should be the members of the body of Christ into headship.

The second is proven when Wycliffe argues that the Vicar of Christ, ie the Pope, is elevated to being above all creatures and angels.¹⁶⁹ This returns to the concept of Jesus' humanly divination upon his resurrection.¹⁷⁰ However, if the Popes are also taking part in this, then they

¹⁶⁷ Lechler aptly explains this point: "It is only by virtue of the gracious election of God that the individual belongs to the number of the saved, and is a member of the body of Christ, a child of the Holy Mother Church, of which Christ is the Husband." Lechler. 289.

¹⁶⁸ *De Ecclesia*. 27. Original reads: "primo per hoc quod talis participacio non tolleret distinccionem personarum et capitum, et sic mater ecclesia haberet mille capita."

¹⁶⁹ Loc. Cit.

¹⁷⁰ Many Patristic authors have written about this. Two good examples are Athanasius *Against the Arians* 1.39, and before him Irenaeus *Against Heresies*. 4.38.

are also being lifted up, even though they are not God incarnate, to the position which God incarnate alone holds. If this is then argued that it is a spiritual ascent, as the Popes were apt to do, then the reality of the incarnation would be destroyed.

Wycliffe's vehement critique of the Pope continues into what comes as a rather confusing theological rant. However, while it is not straight forward it does bear the mark of his realism and continues within critiques of the poor logic of the established church.

If it is being said according to that which remains continues as the Church, because of the unity of the known head the Pope, it is not (true) all which are the Church who was the Pope, which is against the decretals.¹⁷¹ Similarly, when asking that which does not depend by this head in the reason of the Church, when decapitated from this remnant head is equally holy and sane. When as justice responds to this head and this Church consequently he is dead and alive (now following the exposition: these persons are this Church who persists through the moral life that is a man). Therefore this person will persist, and although the same stops as the Pope dies, who neither reveals the material Church nor spiritual, when he stands with this was the first death. The head of all that is the life, who stands herewith that which is known, other in more grace seen according to the present justice and final perseverance towards life against travelers. *Similarly, this apostolic Church who Peter was a pre-known remnant in the way and will continue as a remnant, as he said that opinion when he decreed. Therefore, this Pope is not able to be the head above this total Church, who then to have from equal all heads who were Popes, and results, all Church succeeding are not head of his unitary by this pope, when he had united them which in that way, came before this just as and will have after his corruption.*¹⁷²

¹⁷¹ The Decretal Wycliffe is speaking of is Pope Boniface VIII bull *Unam Sanctam* where he claims that all salvation is dependent on the bishop of Rome. see Kenny, *Wyclif*. 71.

¹⁷² *De Ecclesia*. 28. Original reads: "Si dicutr secundo quod manet continue eadem ecclesia propter unitatem capitia scilicet pape, no tollitur quin adhuc tot sunt ecclesie quot erant ape; quod est contra decretalem. Similiter, querendo de quiditate illus ecclesie, patet, cum sit date persone, ipsa non dependet ab ipso capite in racione ecclesie, cum decpaitata ab isto capite manet eque sancta et sana; cum tamen iuxta responsinem hoc caput et hec ecclesia consequerentur se in morte et vita (nam sequitur expositorie: iste persone sunt hec ecclesia que durabit per totam vitam illius hominis: ergo iste persone seic durabunt, et per idem desinent, isto papa mortuo, quod nec oportet de ecclesia materiali nec spirituali, cum stat quod iste sit primus moruus tota ecclesia sua superstite. Nec oportet quod iste sit capitaneus onium istorum in vicaione, quia stat quod sit prescitus, aliis in ampion gracia eciam secundum presentem iusticiam et finaliter preseverantibus ac viam oppositam viantibus. Similiter, eadem ecclesia apostolica cui Petrus presidebate manet modo et manebit continue, ut dicit ista opinio cum decreto. Iste ergo pap no potest esse caput super ista totali ecclesia, quia tunc haberet ex equo tot capita quot papas, et per consequens, talis

The question Wycliffe poses simply stated is what happens when a Pope dies? He states it in the more colorful language of what happens when the Church's head is decapitated. However, the two questions are about the same circumstances. For Wycliffe, as the Church is a real metaphysical being, the death of the Pope is similar to saying there is a body without a head. He then leaves to conjecture that this body would die. A fair assumption as long as the headless man is not riding a horse. However, Wycliffe notes that the Church continues after the death of the Pope, being equally healthy and sane as it was before the Pope died. Therefore, the Pope must not be the head of the church, because it does not die every time he dies. Furthermore, he emphasized that there is no revelation by the Pope onto the material and the spiritual Church at his death.

All this leads up to the note that Wycliffe sees no grace coming from the pope but rather the grace comes from elsewhere, namely Christ, and is this is the justice and final perseverance for life against the travelers who are the Popes. This all comes in addition to Wycliffe's argument that the Pope is really a member of the Church and not his head, thus at his death, a remnant remains. The word *manet* that has been translated here as 'remnant' may be misleading. Wycliffe is not writing about a small faction of the Church equivalent to the Baptist concept of the 'trail of blood'. Rather he is remarking on the quiddity of the Church remaining upon the death of a pope. The quiddity of the Church is measured in some part by its members, and thus at the death of a pope is not destroyed because of the remnants of the surviving members. Professor Lechler describes it well:

Upon the occasion of his opposing the doctrine of Transubstantiation, he observes that God always preserves *natural knowledge* among the laity, and keeps up

ecclesia successive non capit suam unitatem ab isto pap cum habuit unitatem eandem quam modo antequam ipse fuerit, sicut et habebit post eius corrupcionem."

among some of the clergy the right understanding of the Faith, as in Greece and elsewhere, as seemeth to Him good.¹⁷³

Thus for Wycliffe, those of the True belief, who consists of the predestined faithful, are never absent from the Church, even if the pope and his cardinals go astray. Given the time in which Wycliffe lived, it is not surprising he would hold these views as anti-clericalism was rampant in the late fourteenth and early fifteenth-centuries, as seen by the rise in numbers of flagellants.

What follows from this is Wycliffe's denouncing of the Pope's corruption, an easy target with the goings-on of court in Avignon. It is not a far stretch to assume Wycliffe as his questions about the Pope's grandiose lifestyle when he sits in the see of Peter and Paul, both of whom died for their faith. Furthermore, the Church's call to serve the poor does not square with the *modus vivendi* of the papal curia. Thus, when Wycliffe condemns those who look to be a part of this Church which is gathered around the Pope, he simply gives them over to their own devices, namely the corruption of the false head of the Church.

Wycliffe resoundingly summarizes his argument at the beginning of his second chapter. He states his argument clearly and succinctly.

This is being said that no Pope on this side of Christ is able to intend what is Catholic: behold it is not given to be (good) being put under in the Lord Pope (who utters) all blasphemes. Now just according to this one conclusion is only the Church, whose head is Christ, and does not have in the earth many heads, nor is it a monster. Therefore no Vicar of Christ is Christ, after which no Vicar of Christ is the head of that Church. Surpassing the latter consequently puts in the spoken decretals according to the question his part. *None are to be seen Catholic that said decretals are in this impossible or unprovable given that logic or metaphysics.*¹⁷⁴

¹⁷³ Lechler. 306. Lechler is drawing from Wycliffe's *Triologus*. 261 where he notes that God always keeps a natural notion in the laity.

¹⁷⁴ *De Ecclesia*. 26. Original reads: "Hic dicitur quod nullus papa citra Christinus potest catholice illud intendere: ideo non debet supponi in domino pap tant blasfemia. Nam iuxta secundam conclusionem unica est talis ecclesia cuius caput est Christus, t non habet in terris multa capita, ne sit monstrum. Cum ergo nullus Christi

The head of the Church is Christ, and the Vicar of Christ is not Christ himself. Therefore by *modus ponens*, the Vicar of Christ is not the head of the Church because he himself is not Christ, who is the exclusive head of the Church. Wycliffe returns the volley that the decretals that claim that the Vicar of Christ is the head of the Church defy logic and metaphysics because the ecclesia refused to accept this fact.

However, what bears the unstated and yet poignant basis for this logical argument is Wycliffe's realism. If the Vicar of Christ were to claim that he was the head of the Church as the figurative Christ, thereby only using the sign which is the term 'head of the Church,' then there would be no metaphysics issue. Since Wycliffe believed the term 'head of the Church' to have quiddity, as we previously established that he believes that what terms describe to have quiddity, then for the Vicar of Christ to claim such an office would be to violate the quiddity of the head of the Church, who is Christ.¹⁷⁵

Wycliffe Explains the Role of the Pope and the Church

Up to this point, it has been established that (1) the Church is a Universal in so far as it proceeds as a real reality as understood by God. (2) Christ is the head of the Church uniquely, and (3) the pope is not the head of the Universal Church because this would be to make the head

viacius sit Christus, sequitur quod nullus Christi vicarius sit caput illius ecclesie Antecedens istius consequencie ponitur in dicta decretali secundum quamlibet eius partem. Nec videtur catholicum quod dicta decretalis sit in hoc impossibilis vel improvide posita quoad logicam vel metaphysicam."

¹⁷⁵ Stephen Lahey explains the difference between Grosseteste's Universals, to whom Wycliffe is indebted for his own understanding of Universals, and the realm of platonic forms. He writes: "That is, is there a universal 'dog' by virtue of which all animals that have a canine nature are defined, or are all canine animals members of the species dog without reference to some immutable, eternal dog-ness? Grosseteste argued for the existence of universals *ante res*, following the traditional Boethian version of the *Categories* in which a neoplatonist reading Aristotle's ontology determined much of the twelfth-century philosophy. This does not mean Grosseteste conceived of a realm of universals having existence between God and creation, a Platonic world of forms. Universals do not exist apart from their particulars, but are ontologically distinct from the particulars in which they inhere... The subordinate relationship of species universals to genus universals, for example, is not dependent upon our recognition of that relation, but is a real relation based in the directive creative force of the divine ideas, God's definitive understanding of creation." Lahey. 65-66.

of the Church, as Wycliffe provocatively says ‘a monster’. The next question to tackle is what does Wycliffe believe the proper functioning of the Pope in relation to the Holy Catholic Church? In his definition, he does so by once again alluding to a realist standpoint, however, this time being more forward in his explanation of what he believes rather than what he does not.

If it is said according to that remains to continue with that Church always unified head understood as the Pope, not removed then to all that are the Church, which was the pope; this is against the decretals. Similarly, querying of the quiddity of this Church, to set when certain persons are given, that is not dependent by this head in ecclesiastical reason.¹⁷⁶

Here Wycliffe has set the stage. The decretals claim that the quiddity of the Church is dependent on the Pope and not on ecclesiastical reason. Thus the entirety of the Church is reducible to ‘certain persons’ which is namely the Pope and the Cardinals.¹⁷⁷ This latter point was proven in 1378 during the great western schism when the Cardinals proved their authority by electing two popes. However, the Pope chooses who will be Cardinals, therefore the system is cyclical in nature. Nonetheless, Wycliffe has set ecclesiastical reason and the Papal decretals against one another. He continues:

When decapitated by this: (the Pope) the head in the reasoned Church, after the decapitation the Church remains and is holy and healthy; with the just response this head and this Church consequently herself in death and life (now after the exposition: these persons are this Church and will endure with the total life of this man): therefore this person just as was endured, and through this is destined, as

¹⁷⁶ *De Ecclesia*. 28. Original reads: “Si dicatur secundo quod manet continue eadem ecclesia propter unitatem capitis scilicet pape, non lollitur quin adhuc tot sunt ecclesie quot erant pape; quod est contra decretalem. Similiter, querendo de quiditate illius ecclesie, patet, cum sit date persone, ipsa non dependet ab ipse capite in ratione ecclesie.”

¹⁷⁷ Lechler efficiently shows how Wycliffe refutes this idea: “It is self-evident that, with such a view of the Church as this, Wycliffe could not but regard as radically false the prevailing notion according to which the Church and the clergy were looked upon as one and the same thing, all the members of the clerical order being included in the Church, and all non-clergy excluded from it.” Lechler. 289.

this Pope's death, which neither opened from the Church material nor the spiritual, withstand which this is the first death, the total Church you supersede.¹⁷⁸

As might be expected, Wycliffe references history. Popes die because they are human, and therefore the Church is decapitated of her head. However, the Church continues on in a holy and healthy manner. This raises the question, if the decretals are right in saying the quiddity of the Church is based on the Pope, then how can it continue in this fashion? Wycliffe swiftly responds by noting the obvious fact (from his set up prior to this) that the quiddity of the Church actually is based on the reasoning Church and not the Pope. He then sweeps in for the final blow:

None ought say that which is the head of all in this way , which stands as that which is pre-known, other in amplified grace also according to the present justice and final preservation to life opposite being life. Similarly, now the Apostolic Church who Peter presides remains in the way and remains continual, as is said this opinion with the decree. This therefore the pope is not able to be the head above this total Church, which this has from equal total head which the Pope, and consequently, only the Church succeeded not your head unified by this pope, with having unified this which in this way, before which this is made just as and will have after his corruption.¹⁷⁹

The original pope who was Peter continues to be head over the Church by his apostolic see. This Church is different than the corrupt church of Avignon, known for its debauchery and corruption. Rather, this is the Church that both continues to reason and is committed to justice. The Pope is unworthy to be the head of this Church because of his manifold sins and offenses against God

¹⁷⁸ *De Ecclesia*. 28. Original reads: "cum decpaitate ab isto capite manet eque sancta et sana; cum tamen iuxta responsionem hoc caput et hec ecclesia consequerentur se in morte et vita (nam sequitur expositorie: iste persone sunt hec ecclesia que durabit per totam vitam illius hominis: ergo iste persone sic durabunt, et per idem desinent, isto papa moruo, quo nec oportet de ecclesia materiali nec spiritali, cum state quod iste sit primus mortuus, tota ecclesia sua superstite."

¹⁷⁹ *Ibid*. Original reads: "Nec oportet quod iste sit capitaneus omnium istorum in viacione, quia atat quod sit prescitus, aliis in ampliori gracia eciam secundum presentem iusticam et finaliter perseverantibus ac ciam oppositum vianibus. Similiter, easem ecclesia apostolica cui Petrus presidebat manet modo et manebit continue, ut dicit ista opinio cum decreto. Iste ergo pap non potest esse caput super ista totali ecclesia, quia tunc haveret ex equo tot capita quot papas, et per consequens, talis ecclesia successiva non capti cuam unitatem ab isto papa, cum habuit unitatem eandem quam modo, antequam ipse fuerit, sicut et habebit post eius corrupeionem."

and the Church. The pope cannot be equal to Peter because he is not of the same moral fiber as the first pope.

Therefore, Wycliffe has defined the role of the Pope and the Church. The Church, in its quiddity, is the reasoned Church, headed by the theologians who seek to better understand God. The Church is not quidditatively dependent on the living Pope because (1) every time he would die the Church would be decapitated and (2) the Pope's do not live up to the moral standard of the original pope, Peter, on account of their debauchery and corruption at Avignon. Finally, the true Church is predestined to continue on through the reasoning Church in spite of the wickedness of the popes because its quiddity lies with the reasoned Church and not the Papacy.

Anthony Kenny aptly describes the difference between the papacy as an institution for Wycliffe and the popes themselves.

When Wycliffe calls particular Popes Antichrists, he does not mean that the Papacy as such is an antichristian institution: rather, just as the office of Pope calls for unparalleled holiness in its possessors, so it gives them unparalleled power of doing harm to the Church.¹⁸⁰

The papacy as an institution is not in question for Wyclif, rather it is those who exist in it. While Wycliffe does seem to make this distinction, there remains the question for Kenny if the office of the Pope can exist outside of the individual as a universal. The office of the papacy is headless if the current pope is not the head of the temporal Church as Kenny himself asserts.¹⁸¹ It should be noted, Wycliffe seems to be unclear as to how this all plays out, however, there is little evidence for him to claim that the Church itself is pope-less.

¹⁸⁰ Kenny. *Wyclif*. 74.

¹⁸¹ Ibid. 71.

Kenny furthermore notes that Wycliffe's repudiation of the popes of Avignon falls in line with a great many saints of the fourteenth century such as St. Catherine of Siena and St. Bridget of Sweden.¹⁸² The former told Pope Gregory that his court 'stank like hell', while the latter claimed the pope was robbing God of 'innumerable souls' and casting them into hell.¹⁸³ From this, it is easy to gather that the anger which Wycliffe had for the *modus vivendi* of the popes was not an unfounded nor unparalleled one.

Conclusion

There is little love lost between Wycliffe and the Pope, as is apparent from his surrounding controversies involving the papacy. Wycliffe also redefined what the Church is. The Church is (1) Universal, spanning all of the faithful, predestined elect. This Universality stems from its head as well, namely Christ. What this results in however is (2) that the Pope is not the head of the Church, or else the Church would become a monster. Rather, the role of the Pope, while being the leader of the militant faithful, can be compromised by his actions which are deemed immoral. This causes him to fail to be the head of the Church, and Wycliffe finds his actions, specifically in *De Ecclesia* Pope Gregory XI the reigning pope at the composition of this book. With this grounding in what Wycliffe defines as the Church, as well as the way in which he understands the Sacrament of the Eucharist, we may continue on to the final chapter, a comparison of Wycliffe's methodology concerning these two controversial areas.

¹⁸² Ibid. 74.

¹⁸³ Cit. Loc.

Chapter Four

Parallel Logic

John Wycliffe's Sacramentology and Ecclesiology flow from the same spring. That spring is his belief in metaphysical realism. This basis for his theology would put him at odds with the Ecclesiastical authorities of his day. This does not mean that the ecclesiastical authorities were themselves nominalist, they had also condemned William of Ockham so as to silence him earlier that century. Rather, it is more likely they took offense at Wycliffe's rebuffs of their authority using tradition as a convenient means of silencing him. Wycliffe being an idealistic academic, argued for his beliefs as if they were the *raison d'être* of the controversy, even while this was likely not the case. In this chapter, Wycliffe's pair of arguments will be traced out side-by-side to show their mirrored logic and Wycliffe's overall *modus operandi*.

Starting with the Universal

For Wycliffe, metaphysics begins with Universals, as these extend from the divine mind into metaphysical Forms. Thus, when one looks for how he intends to argue his understanding of Eucharistic theology and Ecclesiology, they begin with those *rei* that exist as composite beings of individual instantiations of their forms. From Wycliffe's definition of the five-fold nature of Universals, it is possible to see that he believes both the Sacrament and the Church to be of the

third kind of Universal.¹⁸⁴ This means that the Eucharist and the Church are “the common form rooted in its individuals.”¹⁸⁵

The Sacrament of Eucharist

For the Eucharist, the common Forms of the body and blood of Christ are found in the elements after their consecration. This is assumed in many places by Wycliffe because transubstantiation had been widely agreed upon since the twelfth century. As noted before transubstantiation was made famous by Peter Lombard, although he himself was not original theologian to think so.¹⁸⁶ However, he does at least give a nod to the traditional understanding of the change of the Eucharist at the consecration when he writes in the *Triialogus*:

That if the Sacrament is the invisible grace in a visible Form, as the same Genera and Cause exist when the visible Form is a propositional sign with which the Form or quidditative sensibility... When we have laid hold of by communal experience with our senses, that which the priest at the altar is accidentally from bread and wine made or consecrated one sense remains, which is commonly known as the body and blood of Jesus Christ.¹⁸⁷

It is unsurprising to see that Wycliffe believes that when consecrated, the bread and wine do take on the Form of the body and blood of Christ. What he states specifically is that there is an addition in Genera and Cause which affects the communal experience of the visible form in its

¹⁸⁴ “The first and foremost kind (of Universal) is the eternal notion or exemplar idea in God. The second kind is the common created notion in the superior causes, like the intelligences and the heavenly spheres. *The third kind of universal is the common form rooted in its individuals*. This, says Grosseteste, is what Aristotle’s genera and species are. Fourthly, there is the universal which is the common form in its accidents, apprehended by the lowest form of intellect. There is a fifth kind of universal -signs and mental acts- which Grosseteste set aside as irrelevant to his concerns.” John Wycliffe *De Universalibus*. Trans. Kenny, Anthony. Clarendon Press: Oxford. 1985. 165-77.

Stephen Lahey explains this succinctly: “There (the above passage) Wyclif distinguishes between (1) eternal mental being in God; (2) being in universal causes; (3) being in particular cause; (4) particular being; an (5) being predicated.” Thus the third part as “being in particular cause” is the individual bread and wine and people of the Church respectively. Stephen E. Lahey *Philosophy and Politics in the Thought of John Wyclif*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press. 2003. 73

¹⁸⁵ *De Universalibus*.

¹⁸⁶ There is a long tradition of using greek philosophy to explain the Eucharist in both the east and west.

¹⁸⁷ John Wycliffe. *Triialogus*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 2013. 244, 247.

quiddity. The addition is the metaphysically quidditative Genera and Cause which is Christ.

Thus, the essence of the sacrament is altered by its consecration at the altar, taking on the Universal of Christ's body and blood, which are from a different Genera than that of bread and wine. This, as noted in chapter two, will lead to issues with the annihilation of the bread.

While this may seem a pedantic definition of terms, it is important because it is how Wycliffe defines the universal as being of the third kind. The particular creature of the Body and Blood in the Eucharist exists in its individual instantiation. It does not exist *extra mens* but in the physical experience of eucharistic reception. Hence, the Sacrament of the Eucharist is not purely abstract for Wycliffe, but a Universal that is instantiated in the individuals which compose the genera of the Universal. The Sacrament becomes a sacrament by first moving from the pre-concentrated host and wine, which participate in the universals of bread and wine respectively, which are then raised up in Christ's body and blood, and then returned together to the form which they exist as Sacraments.

The Church

The Church for Wycliffe is all the pre-known and thus predestined elect. The Church's quiddity is made up of not the Pope as was asserted by the special revelation of the decretals, but the myriad of the faithful. As Wycliffe writes:

Then Just as in Aristotle's first heaven, *all three are first set*: not as we say the Catholic Church neither who in you remain thus three: a part in heaven triumphant, a part in purgatory dormant and a part on earth militant.¹⁸⁸

¹⁸⁸ John Wycliffe. *De Ecclesia*. Arr. Iohann. L. Loserth. Wycliffe Society: London. 1886. 8.

Hence it is the groups of the Church that makeup what it is as a quidditative Universal. The three parts are in fact genera to the corporate members of their constituents, and this does not remove that what makes up these genera are the *whole body of the Elect*.¹⁸⁹

Thus the Church is composed of all those who exist in the three parts, those in heaven, those on earth and those awaiting liberation in purgatory. It is interesting to note that nowhere does Wycliffe question this threefold division of the cosmos as later reformers would come to do. He unquestioningly believed that the souls of individuals compose the different parts of the Church in each specific place, giving quiddity to each Church in a given place. The Church *in toto* is the composite of these composites, making it a Universal existing in its parts. It does not exist outside of them, and thus falls in Grosseteste's third category of Universals to which Wycliffe himself adheres, just as the Eucharist does as well.

Furthermore, the Church is more than merely a composition of parts, it is also the body of Christ, with Christ as its head. Wycliffe makes this argument in a roundabout way, arguing not for Christ being the head of the body of the Church, which can safely be assumed by him, but in opposition to the Pope's claim that he himself was the head of the Church.

It appears from this that the head that the Church is shown to be above all the wise angels, with them being a member of this church, which Christ alone is able to befit between all the predestined, as put in Hebrews 1.4. Also Romans 1.2, it is said that Christ *to be predestined*, and as the Church is alone the number predestined. Therefore as the man without special revelation can not assert without from that he is predestined, yet not assert he is to be a member, and consequently, is not the head of the Church.¹⁹⁰

¹⁸⁹ Prof. Lechler. *John Wycliffe and his Precursors*. The Religious Tract Society: London, UK. 1884. 288. Also Anthony Kenny. *Wyclif*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. 1985.

¹⁹⁰ *De Ecclesia*. 5.

Christ is predestined to be the head of the Church, in which the pope and the angels are members of its body. Any special revelation contrary to this would contradict the Scriptures and undermine the original authoritative message. Furthermore, the number of the predestined are also members of this singular head, according to the aforementioned threefold division.

What should be drawn from this is that the composite of all the people who make up the predestined are transformed into being the body of Christ which has Christ as its head. This is a subtle but important point that Wycliffe is asserting. The Church has become the Universal of Christ's body, which is to say, Christians are raised up into participation with Christ, as he notes again in rebuking the Pope:

Therefore to be called the *head of the mother Church which is not in communion with the members of the body* in nature than singular, which then to have the Church neither great nor monstrous head. This is perfectly repugnant of the workman, and if his head will be only aggregate, in above no pope will be the head of this Church.¹⁹¹

The body is the body of Christ as seen in Ephesians 5.23. Wycliffe mixes metaphors here with the Church also being the bride of Christ, making it the mother to all who are predestined. While this is common in medieval theology, there is a confusion that occurs between the Church being both Christ's body as well as the Bride of Christ, with the connection coming at the consummation of Christ and His Bride. The two are made one flesh, and the Body of Christ can be called the Bride of Christ because the Body of the Bride of Christ has become one flesh with the Body of Christ.

¹⁹¹ Ibid. 26-27. Italics mine. Original reads: "Vocatur enim caput matris ecclesie quod non communicat cum membris corporis in natura alis singulari, quia aliter haberet ecclesia nimis magnum et monstrum caput; quod repugnaret perfeccioni opificis, et si caput eius foret tale aggregatum, in super nullus papa foret caput illius ecclesie."

Nevertheless, the logic for Wycliffe is that the individuals are members of the collective universal that is the Church. The Church subsists in the individuals but is a Universal above them, existing as a unified and simple genus. This genera mysteriously becomes the body of Christ, which is greater than a human body. This is the same mysterious change from bread and wine into the Body and Blood of Christ at the Eucharist, while also remaining bread and wine.

From Individuals to Universals

While it may be repetitive to say, both the Universal of the Eucharist as well as the Universal of the Church are Universals which come from something transformed into them. They are both to be found existing in part, being genera to the individuals which instantiated them. Thus for the Eucharist, the bread and wine are prior to their transformation the universal genera of bread and wine, whereas the Church is the composite of individuals either triumphant, militant or in purgatory.¹⁹²

For Wycliffe, the next similarity is that the Universal takes on a mystical component when it moves from the individual to the Universal. In the case of the Eucharist, this means taking on the body and blood of Christ in form. Therefore the host and the wine are no longer merely bread and wine but are additionally body and blood. For the Church, this means becoming more than the genera of humanity, or a corporation of individuals. The Church becomes the Body of Christ by means of the Universal mother Church. The Church herself undergoes a change and becomes divine. Finally, after this has changed universally, it changes the individuals themselves in relation to Universal. In the case of the Eucharist, the elements

¹⁹² Michael Wilks defend this concept as mentioned in chapter three: “All things belong to Christ, who is the aggregate person (*persona aggregata*) of the elect, to the Church in the sense of that abstract reality, the *Ecclesia Praedestinatorum* or Church Triumphant.” Michael Wilks. *Predestination, Property, and Power in Studies in Church History 2* (1965). Oxford, UK: Oxbow Books. 2000. 28.

become body and blood metaphysically. In the case of the Church, the individuals become members of the body whose head is Christ. Summarily, what pre-transformed, was raised up, transformed, and took upon itself the substance of Christ

Stephen Lahey confirms the existence of this mystical component of Wycliffe's thought when he explains his metaphysical realism's understanding of the transference from a sign to a reality.

For instance, does the fact that God's uncreated one-ness serves as the principle of the entire genus of a quantity means that the only true quantity predictions of a substance rely somehow on Grace? That is, is the truth of the statement "Henry weighs 170 pounds" reliant upon something other than Henry's being a 170 pounder, something transferred by Grace to make the statement true? In fact, this is exactly the way it is because the exemplar ideas in God provide the basis for it to be; if God did not know it to be so, the thing would not be the way it is.¹⁹³

If God did not have foreknowledge of the metaphysical shift of grace then the metaphysical shift would never occur.¹⁹⁴

The Remnants

None of which has just been said up to this point, with the exception of the political rhetoric which is tangential to Wycliffe's argument, is abnormal for late fourteenth-century theology. All theologians more or less agreed that the elements transformed and that the Church was the Mystical Body of Christ. What is unique to Wycliffe's thought is his argument for the

¹⁹³ Stephen E. Lahey. *Philosophy and Politics in the Thought of John Wyclif*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University press. 2003. 78-79, quoting *De Universalibus*. Chapter 7.

¹⁹⁴ There is an excellent connection here with Wittgensteins theory of an answer only being knowable if one knows the answer to the question beforehand. See Ludwig Wittgenstien. *Philosophical Investigations*. New York, NY: MacMillian. 1953.

remnants of universals, is that they exist before the mystical transformation, as well as after it has been transformed.

Bread and Wine Remains

As noted in chapter two, the common belief of what happened to the universals of bread and wine after the consecration was annihilationism. After being consecrated by the priest, the bread and wine ceased to be and became wholly the body and blood of Christ. However, Wycliffe will disagree with this starting in *De Universalibus*:

In the same way, it is said that the bread and wine are not annihilated because they are converted into accidents. If therefore the remaining accidents of a thing, after the departure of every one of its quantitative parts, prevents its being annihilated, a fortiori the remaining of the essence of a thing in its per se cause, which is the same as the individual which ceases to be, will do so.¹⁹⁵

This is the beginning of Wycliffe's inevitable protest against the annihilation of the bread and wine during the consecration. Some part of the Universal must remain. Wycliffe has not outright said that a remnant of the bread remains in contradiction with the teachings of Transubstantiation as he has allowed himself a way out with the concept of atoms as he writes in *De Universalibus*.

¹⁹⁶ However, he has not hidden away from the fact that he does not agree with the teaching of annihilationism. Wycliffe further clarifies his nuanced point when he writes in the *Trialogus*:

And undoubtedly the laity are idiots, when they say: the bread is the body of *Christ*, therefore that *bread is* and therefore it *remains bread*, and is *at the same time* bread and the body of Christ...that this bread by the virtue of the words of the Sacrament is consecrated by the priest first into the Truth of the body of Christ, and is not able to end to be bread, which humanity from this, which is God, ends to be human, with the nature of bread not from this being destroyed but dignified in substance exalted.¹⁹⁷

¹⁹⁵ *De Universalibus*. 143-144.

¹⁹⁶ Ibid. 144. Wycliffe relies upon the Pseudo-Dionysian concept of atoms being unformed matter.

¹⁹⁷ *Trialogus*. 255-256.

Wycliffe starts his explanation off with an alienating insult of the laity, caricaturing them as being unable to grasp the concept of the co-substance of the bread. However, he is not disparaging them for believing in the existence of the bread after consecration, but rather the manner in which the remnants take. The remnant remains, however it is exalted by being linked and mingled with the body of Christ to its own exaltation. The difference with this and annihilation is the Universal is not destroyed nor consumed by the mystical body, but exalted.

The Remnant of the Church

Wycliffe's argument for the remnant of the Church is the same as his Eucharistic argument and lands him in equally hot water. His argument on the subject has been quoted above, however in bears repeating in part.

This person will persist, and through the same stops, this Pope dies, who neither reveals the material Church nor spiritual, when he stands with this was the first death. The head of all that is the life, who stands herewith that which is pre-known, other in more grace seen according to the present justice and final perseverance of life against travelers. Similarly, this apostolic Church who Peter was a pre-known remnant in the way and will continue as a remnant, as he said that opinion when he decreed.¹⁹⁸

In lieu of the Pope's death, the Church remains. This is because of the 'preknown remnant' that exists in the apostolic Church from Peter. The basis for this is again anti-papal as most of Wycliffe's discussion of the Church tends to be, however, he is making the important point that the Church does not cease when the Pope dies. Wycliffe is openly disagreeing with the decretals which state that the Church is dependent on the Pope for its survival. Rather, he believes a remnant to be constantly present within the Church as it is pre-known. Thus, his disagreement

¹⁹⁸ *De Ecclesia*. 28. Original Latin in footnote 169.

comes when he understands the remnant of the Church to be the laity and the Church is not solely the ecclesiastical structure.

Wycliffe is not throwing off the yoke of the Pope here. He is rather showing his belief that Universals cannot be annihilated or subsumed into a new whole. The members of the Church become the members of the Body of Christ through their participation in the Church. They do not cease to be individuals, and thus when the Pope dies, the Church remains *in manet* through the apostolic see. Part of this is because of who the head truly is, but it is also by the nature of universals of the third kind existing in the individual instantiations of them.

Parallel Remnants

By way of conclusion, both the Eucharist and the Church have remnants after their mystical transformation. For the Eucharist, this is the bread and wine being exalted into the body and blood of Christ. For the Church, this is the remnant of the Church Universal which remains after the death of the vicar of Christ because of the apostolic see. It would appear that Wycliffe is arguing these controversial points along the same track: (1) Mystical transformation occurs, and (2) while remnants are elevated they are not destroyed nor are they consumed. (3) Furthermore, both are becoming the body of Christ, and thus there is always a remnant in the body of Christ, be that the bread and wine at the Eucharist, or the members of the Body of Christ in the Church.

Conclusion

This chapter has attempted to prove a singular idea: that for John Wycliffe the Sacrament of the Eucharist and the Doctrine of the Church are linked in such a way as they logically proceed to their respective points by the same means. This means is that Wycliffe starts with

what he considers to be the third kind of Universal, that which exists in individuals, and then proceeds to remain as a remnant, opposing annihilationism. Taken on its own, this seems to be a rather harmless idea.

However, when one views both the rhetoric surrounding this argument, with its anti-clerical and anti-papal themes as shown in chapters two and three, it is hard to suspect that the end of Wycliffe's life would have been any different. The man poked the not-so-drowsy bear of the Church and challenged her stability. Furthermore, he offended some of the most powerful politicians in Europe. The reasons for this are unclear outside of his own logic which he explains amidst his condemnation of the Pope. Wycliffe was likely angry about not getting the promotion he believed he was promised but also the terrible state of Europe in the latter half of the fourteenth century.

These conditions likely got him indicted but also spared him from having to face trial because of all the other issues that were occurring around Christendom. By the end of his life, the question of 'who is the pope?' was even under debate, further deteriorating the already failing political fabric of medieval society. Death was ever-present because of the plague, wars and there was always some religious uncertainty. The death of the long-reigning Edward III caused a great deal of turmoil, with the duke thrusting Wycliffe into public life.

The peasants' revolt of 1381 was another time of bloodshed, however for all of the commotions that would grip Europe starting in the fourteenth century, it is safe to say that what would come next would change Europe forever. While the romantic arguments of modernist biographers leave much to be desired by the standards of scholarly research, most can agree that while the man John Wycliffe likely had no intention of starting the reformation, what his

followers and subsequent reformers such as Jan Huss and eventually Martin Luther would do with the legacy both of his characters and his ideas would lead to the reformation.

Conclusion

This thesis has sought to demonstrate the means by which Wycliffe thinks. He begins with his Metaphysical interpretation of Theology and builds upwards from his realist Universalism. This leads him away from the Traditional understanding of Eucharistic Theology as well as Ecclesiology. Wycliffe finds there to be remnants in both areas which Tradition purports destroyed or never have existed. However, there are more than unstated similarities in Wycliffe's thought. Some other parallels exist for him between Eucharistic and Ecclesiological Theology. This will be discussed here, as well as summaries of the thesis as well as the effect of the events in Wycliffe's life affecting his theology.

Further Points of Parallelism

While this thesis has been focused on the logical progression for Wycliffe from his Universal Realism towards his Eucharistic and Ecclesiological views, there are other parallelisms that are more direct in Wycliffe's thoughts on these two topics. An example of this is the three divisions in the Church which Wycliffe compares to the three divisions in the Eucharist. This is an allegorical comparison on behalf of the Eucharist, however, it shows that in Wycliffe's mind the two are meant to be understood as coterminal.

Then just as in Aristotle's first heaven, *all three are first set*: not as we say the Catholic Church neither who in you remain thus three: a part in heaven triumphant, a part in purgatory dormant and a part on earth militant. And in this figure say the doctors the sacrifice or the sacrament of the Eucharist is divided into three parts: first, the immersion of the sacrament into liquid is said to signal

the Church triumphant, which in effect and inebriated is the intuition of the divine essence... For those two (other) parts which are given in the hands of the priest: the major is given as a sign to the Church militant and minor is given as a sign of the Church expectant in purgatory...¹⁹⁹

The sacrifice of the Eucharist shines forth a sliver of heaven, showing the Church triumphant. On the other hand, the Church militant as the major and the Church in purgatory see this sign and know of the salvific sacrifice of Christ. This is a sign of what is to come, but also is a reminder of what happened so that what is to come may be reached.

Summary and Historical Connection

A good deal of modern historical research is based on putting a person in his or her context. This thesis has examined Wycliffe's thought and the context in which he thought it, however, it has only spuriously attempted to link the two. Why did Wycliffe believe that Theology should proceed from Universals to the physical, and why did the Universals have to be real?

To reduce his thought to merely a reaction to the regular thinkers' nominalism is to reduce Wycliffe to a determinist state historical, and demand of him not to have free will, which he himself would argue against. Wycliffe underwent an unfathomable amount of death in his life. Certainly, the questions of philosophy would then be at the forefront of a mind of such a person with the natural proclivity to question as he did. There was a myriad of ways to die. One could

¹⁹⁹ John Wycliffe. *De Ecclesia*. Arr. Loserth, Iohann. L. Wycliffe Society; London. 1886. 8. Original text reads: "Unde sicut iuxta Aristotelem primo de celo *omnia primo super tria ponimus*: sic non dicimus ecclesiam catholicam nisi que in se continent ista tria: partem in celo triumphantem, partem in purgatorio dormientem et partem in terris militatam. Et in figuram illius dicunt doctores hostiam vel sacramentum eucaristie dividi in tres partes: Primam immersam sacramento liquido dicunt signare ecclesiam triumphantem, que insorpta et inebriata est intuicione divine essencie... Per illas duas partes quas sacerdos tenet in manibus: Maior supposita aignat ecclesiam in purgatorio expectantem."

be struck down without warning by the plague. One could be caught up in a revolt, or drafted into the army to fight the French and Scottish. One could simply succumb to the rigors of medieval life.

In addition to this, the papacy was no longer a spiritual force in Christendom, but yet another power player at the table of medieval politics. Who then was Wycliffe to trust had a plan over this immense mess of a society? Here is where it should be figured that Universals are so appealing to Wycliffe. There is a plan to the cosmos, and even if those in power make an attempt to thwart God, he still knows the outcome. There is safety in this, which is more than can be said of the world in which Wycliffe lived. God has a rhyme and reason for the way the world works, which he set forth by means of Universals, to which we can look towards for how we should conduct ourselves, ie the law of Christ. The question Wycliffe might have asked would be ‘why else have so much death and destruction in the world if it was not according to a divine plan?’

Thus, Theology, the queen of the sciences of the day, flowed from Universal to individual. Specifically, in the Eucharist and the Church, this means leaving remnants of those things which were destroyed. While Wycliffe may never say this, there is hope in his theology. With the vast amounts of destruction witnessed by him and his contemporaries, to think that God too was a destroyer is disheartening. Rather a God of Love who exalts Universals is much more attractive than one who annihilates or consumes universals. Furthermore, if this is all happening in humanity's collective minds, what are we doing but damning ourselves to destruction.

Wycliffe may be long-winded and convoluted. He is difficult to understand even when one knows how he speaks. However, what he lacks in certain forms of clarity he makes up for in a hopeful response to the horrors of his day. Universals are real and are not destroyed. One need

not always agree with a pope who is acting more for his own gain than for the betterment of Christendom. Wycliffe was a man of his time, and while he was condemned, he attempted to bring hope to a dark and perilous world.

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